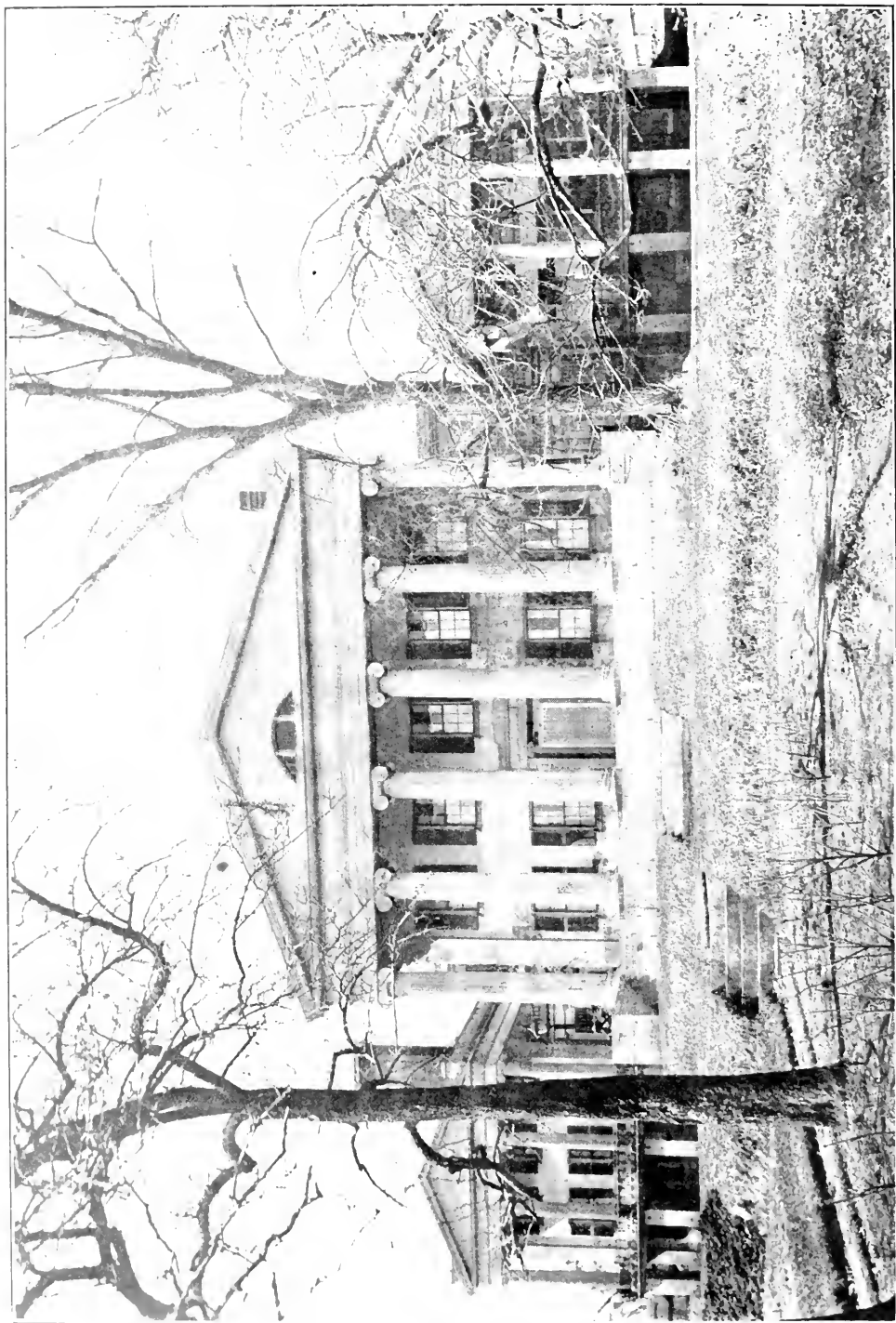


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BENNETT HOUSE, NEW BEDFORD, MASS.
Garden Front.

AMERICAN RENAISSANCE

A REVIEW OF DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE

ILLUSTRATED BY NINETY-SIX
HALF-TONE PLATES

BY
JOY WHEELER DOW
ARCHITECT



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WILLIAM T. COMSTOCK
MCMIV

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TO MY
FRIENDS

PREFACE

This review of American Renaissance originally appeared as a series of papers in the "Architects and Builders' Magazine," and the interest shown in them as they were brought out and the later inquiry for these numbers of the Magazine have led the publisher to suggest the propriety of putting them in more permanent shape.

With this in view the author has carefully collated the articles, added some new illustrations, and in some cases the plates have been enlarged where the subjects seemed worthy of fuller representation than was possible in the limited space allowed in the Magazine.

The book is intended to be an impartial outline history of American domestic architecture from Colonial times to the present day, and the salutary influence upon it of whatever has been good in past building epochs.

How well the subject has been presented, it remains for the readers of the following pages to judge.

THE AUTHOR.

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AMERICAN RENAISSANCE



AMERICAN RENAISSANCE

CHAPTER I

ETHICS

THE magnificence of this subject, even of a single branch—the domestic phase—is disproportionate to a review in one volume, in the scope of which, I fear, I cannot achieve much more than a respectable introduction. But even an introduction, like the overture to an opera, is better begun at the beginning.

Civilized man, and especially one of Anglo-Saxon descent, is a home-loving creature. To him the dwelling-place stands for his most important institution. The arts, sciences and traditions he pursues, mainly as they are to minister unto it, and its fruition is the goal of life. About this dwelling-place, then, there must be a very great deal to be said, indissolubly asso-

American Renaissance

ciated as it is with everything in life worth having—one's childhood, parents, children, wife, sweetheart, and next to these one's own personal comfort—one's hours of leisure and recreation. Therefore, just so much as domestic architecture departs in an impersonal, artificial way from whatever relates to or reflects these associations, just so much does it err—does it fail. It will be obvious, upon a moment's consideration, that any cold-blooded practice or discussion of academic formulæ, alone, looking to the development of American domestic architecture, is hopelessly inefficient.

The home one builds must mean something besides artistic and engineering skill. It must presuppose, by subtle architectonic expression, both in itself and in its surroundings, that its owner possessed, once upon a time, two good parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, and so on ; had, likely, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, all eminently respectable and endeared to him ; that *bienséance* and family order have flourished in his line from time immemorial—there were no black sheep to make him ashamed—and that he has inherited heirlooms, plate, portraits, miniatures,



IN AN OLD-TIME RENAISSANCE GARDEN.



THE GOVERNOR SMITH HOUSE, WISCASSET, ME.

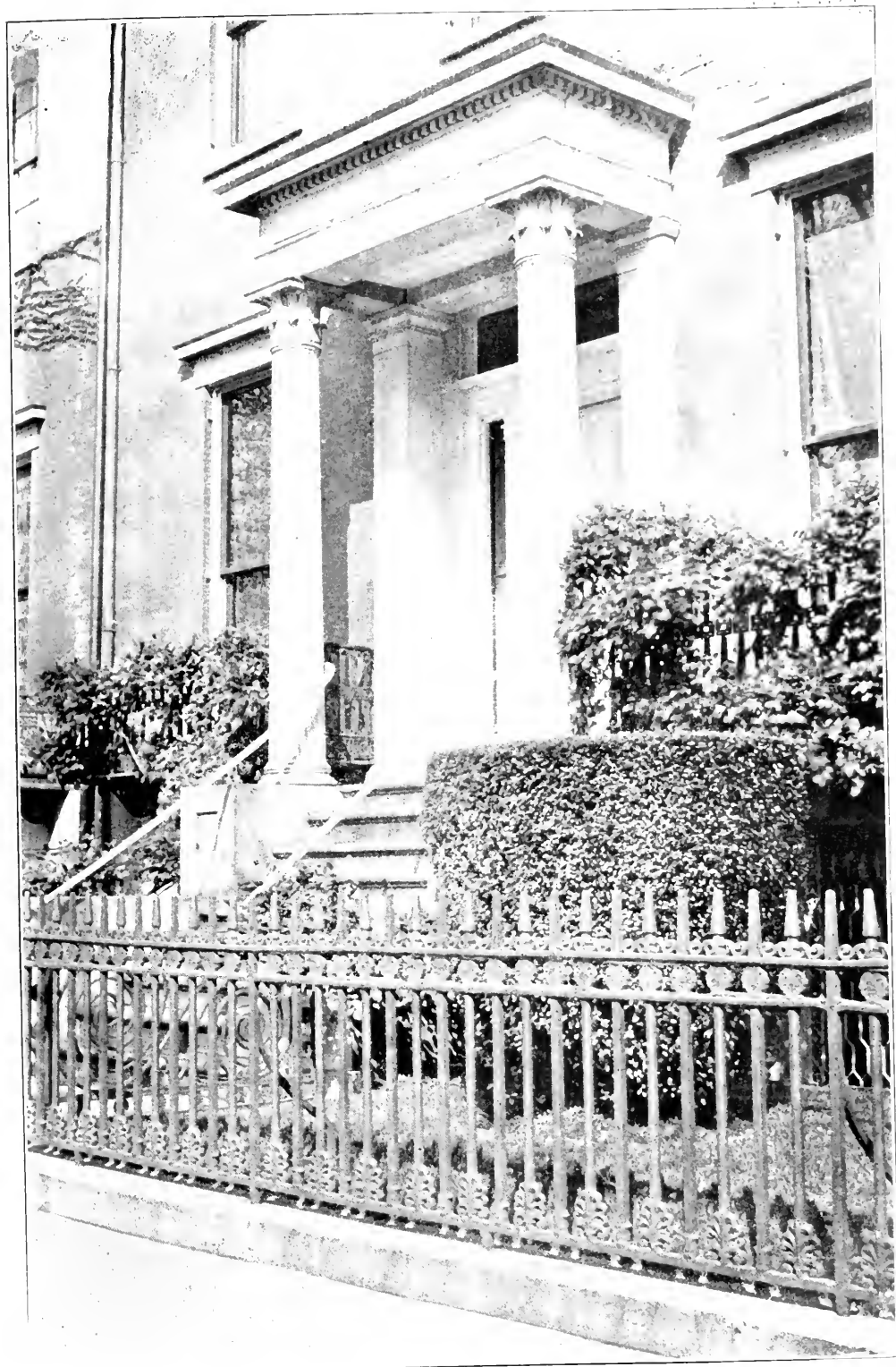
TO THE
AIRBORNE

Ethics

pictures, rare volumes, diaries, letters and state archives to link him up properly in historical succession and progression. We are covetous of our niche in history. We want to belong somewhere and to something, not to be entirely cut off by ourselves as stray atoms in boundless space either geographical or chronological. The human mind is a dependent thing and so is happiness. We may not, indeed, have inherited the house we live in; the chances are we have not. We may not remember that either of our parents or any of our grandparents before us, ever gloried in the quiet possession of as ideal a homestead as is illustrated in Plate I to convey the atmosphere intended; but for the sake of goodness—for the sake of making the world appear a more decent place to live in—let us pretend that they did, and that it is now ours. Let us pretend that God has been so good to us, and that we have proved worthy of His trust. With this amount of psychological preparation, I believe it is possible for every cultivated American man or woman to approach the subject of American Renaissance architecture—domestic architecture—in the true spirit of understanding.

American Renaissance

By American Renaissance I allude to no "American eclectic style." That term "eclectic style," which so frequently crops out in treatises upon architecture, were you to follow it up, would be found to signify, as a rule, merely American nonsense and aberration. And I suppose there is no nation which may show such an imposing array of architectural nonsense as the United States during the last fifty years of their independence. Certainly no nation has evolved a national style of architecture, intentionally, as is constantly urged upon American enterprise. Such a thing could have no historic value, while it could not escape being vulgar and monotonous. Characteristic architecture is of very slow development, and although there have been building epochs of remarkable activity, in none is the progress appreciable from year to year. American Renaissance differs from that of other countries only as it has been affected by the local conditions and requirements of America. Good Renaissance—I regret there is a sight of building that is bad—is like good-breeding, pretty much the same the world over, differentiated only by local color or custom.



DOORWAY, WASHINGTON SQUARE NORTH, N. Y. CITY.

Ethics

The predominant local color which distinguishes American Renaissance has been given to it by what has been our great national building commodity, i. e., wood. The Greeks and Romans built of stone when they had the money to pay for it, as does everybody else; otherwise, people in new countries fall back upon a less expensive material. Our less expensive material was wood. Both stone and wood have grain, and have to be used with the same careful regard to it. Whether we build our columns up of stone or wooden sections—latitudinal in the one case, longitudinal in the other—to support a cornice also constructed in sections according to the convenient sizes of commerce for the particular material, makes no difference to the canons of art so long as we are not trying to deceive or to imitate one material with another simply with that end in view. It is extremely doubtful if our American ancestors were ever guilty of premeditated deception. Their material was an honest material: it had to be fashioned in some way, why not after the manner of the Renaissance? In our own day of numerous shortcomings in matters architectural it rarely enters the

American Renaissance

head to deceive upon this point. Notwithstanding the tremendous resources now at command we yet prefer wooden columns to stone ones for dwelling-houses. As national wealth has increased, however, there has been that natural tendency, of course, to carve the Renaissance details of stone, and the white marble porches of Washington square, North (see example, Plate II) may be cited as splendid bits of American Renaissance. But if we go further, and by reason of accumulated affluence erect the entire structure of the new Colonial house in stone—columns, cornices, window and door casings, etc., strange to say we lose an indefinable charm—a certain warmth and personality with which American history has invested wood. Besides, the fashion and style of Renaissance motive and detail is as suitable to wood as it is to stone; and if the first named material is not quite so durable it is much more easily repaired and replaced.

In English Renaissance, local conditions commonly restricted the use of wood to the interiors. In American Renaissance, the plenitude of this material enabled the Colonial builders to use it for the outside as well,



PICKERING HOUSE, SALEM.
Erected A. D. 1649.



COLE HOUSE, FARMINGTON, CONN.

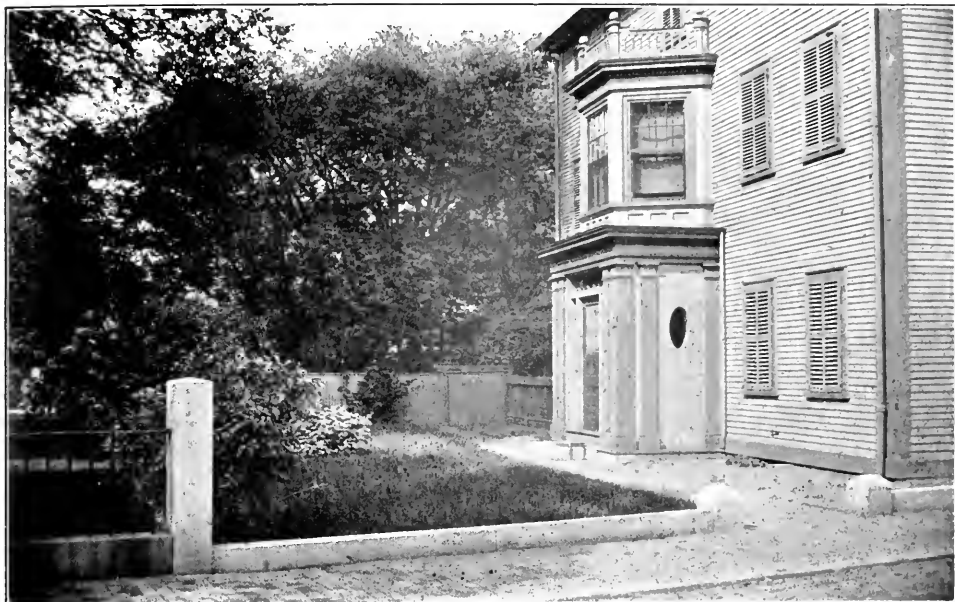
Ethics

and with great advantage, for it permitted the Colonist to elaborate the elevations of his dwelling, gaining thereby warmth, cheerfulness and grace, and all easily within his means. Without the slightest danger of bankruptcy he could proceed to embellish the curtilage with arched gateways, ornamental fences, terrace rails and summer-houses *ad lib.* I have selected, to suggest such amplification, the photograph of an old-time Renaissance garden in the rear of the Watkinson house at Middletown, Connecticut (Plate I), also the photograph of an ancient house at Farmington (Plate III). The latter has a beautiful Renaissance gateway which would be an impossibility in stone. I believe it is called the "Cole house," and that its owner is a cousin of President Roosevelt. It serves my purpose, too, on another count—its color scheme. I am not prepared to say just why two particular shades of common brown paint should be so effective for certain kinds of Colonial houses. Certainly, this one frankly disavows any allegiance to architectural stonework. It fairly proclaims itself to be a wooden building, while all we can say is that those unerring sensibilities within us by

American Renaissance

which we distinguish right from wrong are satisfied beyond the shadow of doubt, and so we have no great need to question the whys and wherefores upon a purely ethical point. In Salem, Massachusetts, there are numerous examples of brown Colonial houses. Extremely effective in themselves, they make the most beautiful photographs imaginable (see Plate IV). Within the radius of a few squares you may obtain half a dozen equally charming glimpses of Colonial scenery. Indeed, if you want atmosphere, and plenty of it—go to Salem.

Had America been settled and colonized two centuries earlier, under a Tudor king, most likely there would have been a Gothic influence in the early work. It is difficult to know in our day how it could possibly have been exploited in wood, and there is no excuse for our attempting anything of the kind at this time of unlimited resources in the building trade. Battlements, keeps and moats were Feudal protectory measures, and would have been worse than useless constructed of anything inflammable. About the only legitimate Gothic architecture expressed in wood which



IF YOU WANT ATMOSPHERE AND PLENTY OF IT, GO TO SALEM.



HISTORIC ATMOSPHERE IN A MODERN DWELLING.

"Silvergate," Summit, N. J. (1901.)

Ethics

has stood the test of time, is represented by the 17th and 18th century chalets of Switzerland, and I doubt if even Yankee ingenuity could have evolved anything half so good. As a matter of fact we have no ancient Gothic exemplars. It is said that the old Pickering house on Broad Street in Salem, built A. D. 1649 (see Plate III), was a replica in wood of a Jacobean tavern in England, namely, the Peacock Inn, Derbyshire. The venerable dwelling at Salem has passed through many vicissitudes, and in 1842, when the influence of John Ruskin was so misused in America, the Pickering house was largely remodeled, so that it is impossible to say, to-day, how successful an adaptation of Jacobean work this was. But even Jacobean architecture is scarcely Gothic architecture since England incorporates it with all the rest of her Renaissance.

Sir Christopher Wren was supreme upon the architectural stage of England when the prosperity of the American colonies was sufficient to warrant the academic study of domestic architecture upon this side of the Atlantic, and Sir Christopher was the very life of the English Renaissance in its stricter sense. During

American Renaissance

this great history-making epoch, the giant forests of America came into excellent play for following out—if often in a crude and kind of miniature way—whatever the prodigious architect executed in stone. There was no bit of classic detail from either Athens or Rome, transmitted to London through what I may call the “Florentine Clearing-house” presided over by Palladio, Sansovino, Scammozzi and their contemporaries, but what could be carved more readily in wood; and time and history have thrown a glamour over all this wooden development of ours, and established its right of succession with a hall-mark.

But the main point in favor of Renaissance architecture, it must be remembered, was that it lent itself extremely well to the Anglo-Saxon home-feeling. It emanated from a land that had reached the pinnacle of attainment in the arts of peace—Italy—and it was so easy to fashion and make minister to most Anglo-Saxon home requirements. Luckily, the Colonial builders were conservative artificers, neither so clever nor so restless as this generation, or they, certainly, could not have resisted the eloquence of false prophets and knav-

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ish architectural promoters and fakirs who came their way. And we should have been deprived of our illustrious inheritance, which, happily, cannot be taken from us now.

Fortunately for American architecture, Sir Christopher Wren was what we would call in our vernacular "all right." He had a good thing, an inexhaustible mine for supplying ideas for all manner of buildings, and he worked it for the best interests of all concerned. His reputation and success have fired many a modern, would-be Wren to dare to try the experiment of some rival kind of architecture. Such is the aspect we have now of the late H. H. Richardson and his Romanesque style (Plate V).

Trinity Church in Boston was a superb design when it was finished, and continues to be so to-day. But its best influence, I fear, has been perverted forever. A quarter of a century ago Richardson was hailed as an apostle equal with Wren, and America went mad, not in a Romanesque revival, but in a carnival of it, by which I mean to say it was burlesqued. It is sad to reflect that such a genius as the man who designed the

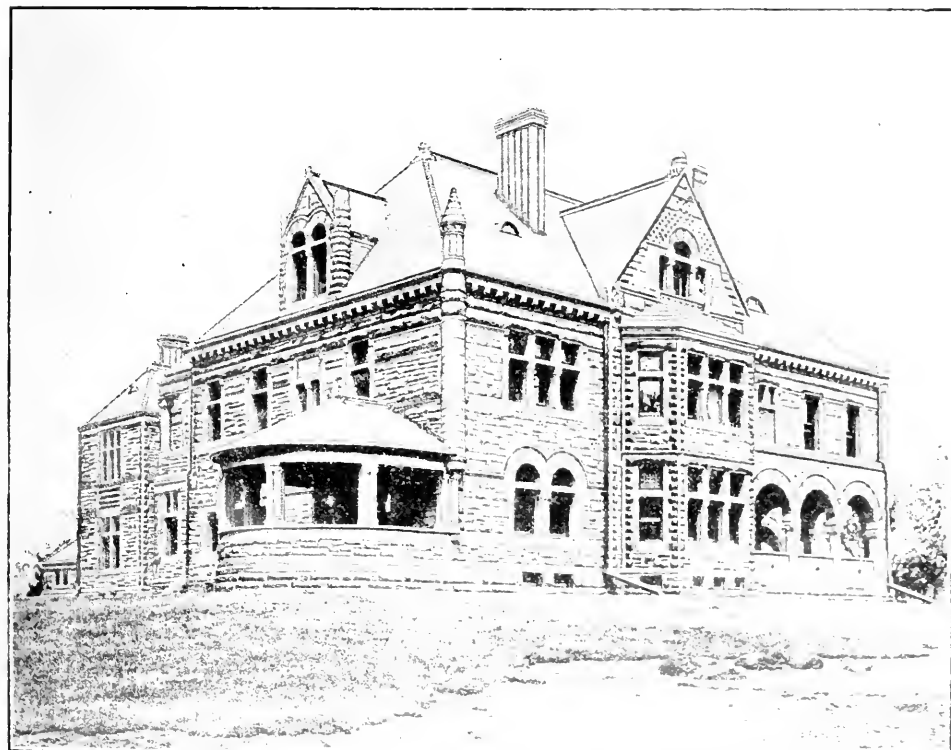
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church in Boston should have allowed himself to succumb to the wiles of the flatterers enough to be drawn into the disgraceful saturnalia which followed so close upon his brilliant début.

Now the home of the Romanesque was not Florence. It pretended to nothing of the court of Lorenzo the Magnificent, which, if it stood for anything, was elegant living. Mediæval, benighted south of France was the home proper of the Romanesque, and its proper medium of expression—churches, cloisters, and monasteries. What could such a style of architecture contribute to the Anglo-Saxon home? Absolutely nothing. And when Trinity Church was finally completed, Richardson had practically exhausted everything there was in the newly borrowed style. He could have gone on, probably, raising ecclesiastic edifices, designing an occasional library or two in good form, without directly cribbing from his masterpiece; but neither he nor his imitators—and they were legion—cared a fig for the ethics or proprieties of architecture. They appear to have been actuated alone by the same principles of expediency which govern the



SHIRLEY-ON-THE-JAMES. *See Chapter I.*



AMERICAN ROMANESQUE DWELLING, BY AN IMITATOR OF RICHARDSON.

Date about 1890.

Ethics

"New Art" movement. They invented an exaggerated architectural grammar, without doubt derived from the old mediæval cathedrals in the south of France, but so vulgarized as to establish a clear case of libel for those eminently respectable prototypes. This grammar the rabid reformers proceeded to apply to every kind of secular building in America, finally to American dwelling-houses themselves. They did not reckon with their grandparents for an instant, nor they. They apparently took the keenest delight in walking rough-shod over every sacred home memory. They openly insulted the very ancestors to whom they owed existence. But the balance of good and evil there is in the world cannot be disturbed so suddenly or arbitrarily. Outraged history was not slow to assert itself, and after a while would have no more of the dwelling-house Romanesque. I regret to say that Richardson's imitators were not the last of their race, and that there have been other and as rabid architectural reformers, of whom I shall speak in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

ART AND COMMERCIALISM

Not very long ago two enterprising architects in a Western State succeeded in inventing a characteristic style of architecture of some merit. I do not know its name. I am not sure that it has any. But as it is likely to be somewhat in vogue for several years to come, I may as well print herewith a simple recipe for combining its essential elements :

Recipe : First, you must endeavor to find some valuable fragment of ancient Greece or Rome, preferably a pedestal for a statue, base of a column, or even the shaft itself and capital, which should not be too attenuated, however, and is to be translated, if necessary, from a cylindrical form into a rectangular one. Now, here is the scheme :

Punch your elevations full of rectangular holes in seemly rows, divide them into latitudinal sections by



DOORWAY, BRISTOL, R. I.

Art and Commercialism

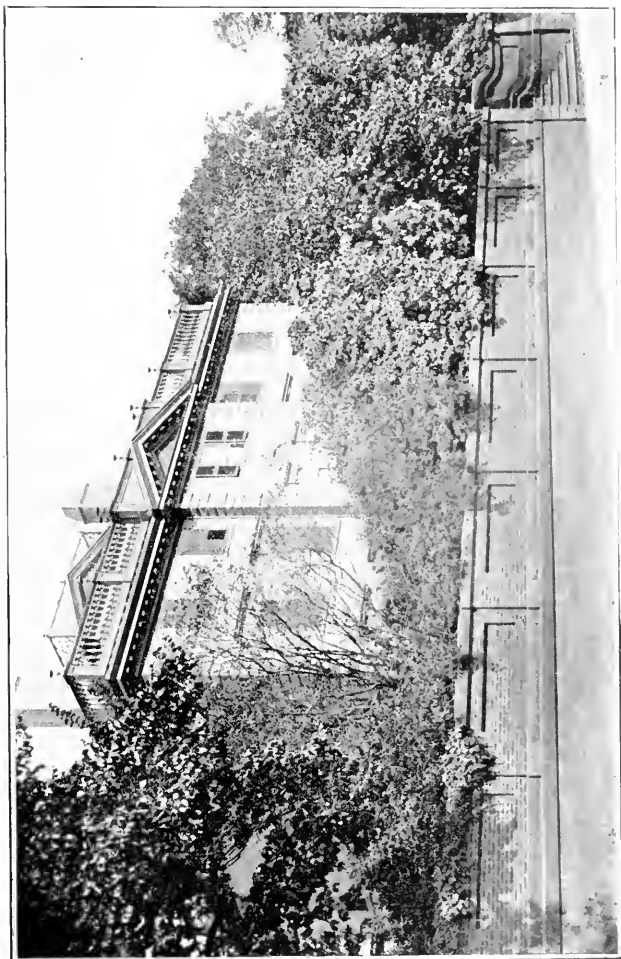
several belt courses of East Indian flat-carving, and bore a semi-circular opening or a series of them (they may be semi-ellipses if preferred) upon the ground line of the projected edifice to afford a mode of ingress and egress corresponding, proportionately, to the same convenience designed for bees in a bee-hive. Next, pour in Alice in Wonderland's "Drink me" elixir to make it grow, and await results of the magic drug. This is the critical moment. All must work harmoniously, and, having reached the height limit imposed by the elevator manufacturer, perhaps, quickly cap the building with some red, corrugated tiles, if you choose, in the form of a Moresque roof, ornament with lantern and flagstaff, and, behold!—the charm operates!—the great American "sky-scraper" of a commercial city has been achieved.

It is not within the province of this review to enter into a discussion of the problem of housing commercialism. It is odd that nobody hints how posterity is going to laugh at us, censure our cupidity, and eventually raze every one of our hideous "sky-scrapers" that shall be left standing. It is odd that the present congestion of Manhattan as a crime against decency,

American Renaissance

with all the idle land that is adjacent and available, is not painfully manifest in this so-called year of grace MCMIV. But it is within the province of this review to say that whenever the soaring kind of architecture precipitated itself upon the Anglo-Saxon dwelling-house there was a tremendous crash and revolution. It was telescoped, it was flattened—grotesquely flattened, but still it was remarkable for ingenuity, for cleverness, and, above everything, for novelty, as would be a dwelling-house loaned by another planet. So strange, indeed, this newly-invented architecture grew that it became simply impossible to prevail upon ancestral ghosts, legends and folk-lore, that habitually are part and parcel of the habitation of man, to have anything to do with a device *à la mode* that appeared to be in every way so very much better suited to the needs of a Roman bath-house after the manner of Alma Tadema. The following lines from Edgar Allan Poe's "Ulalume" may aptly express the injured feelings of those sentimental amenities:

"Oh, hasten!—oh, let us not linger!
Oh, fly!—let us fly!—for we must."



AMERICAN RENAISSANCE.

ANALYSIS.

Moresque Spain.....	0 per cent.	Newly reclaimed land.....	0 per cent.
Moresque Algiers.....	0 "	Chinese ornament.....	0 "
Moresque California Mission.....	0 "	Modern invention.....	0 "
East Indian.....	0 "	Anglo-Saxon home atmosphere.....	100



THE NEWLY INVENTED ARCHITECTURE.

ANALYSIS.

Moresque Spain.....	10 per cent.	Newly reclaimed land	10 per cent.
Moresque Algiers.....	10 "	Chinese ornament.....	5 "
Moresque California Mission	10 "	Modern invention, pure	50 "
East Indian.....	5 "	Anglo-Saxon home atmosphere.....	60 "



EASTOVER TERRACE AND PERISTYLE.

Art and Commercialism

For convenient reference of the reader a sample of this newly-invented architecture is respectfully submitted (Plate VIII), and a very clever sample it is. The inventors of the style themselves could have done no better; only the irresistible melancholy in the rhyming of Poe's poem is not easily put out of the head, especially when, as in this case, it happens to be extremely appropriate. So let us continue:

“ And we passed to the end of a vista,
But were stopped by the door of a tomb—
By the door of a legended tomb.”

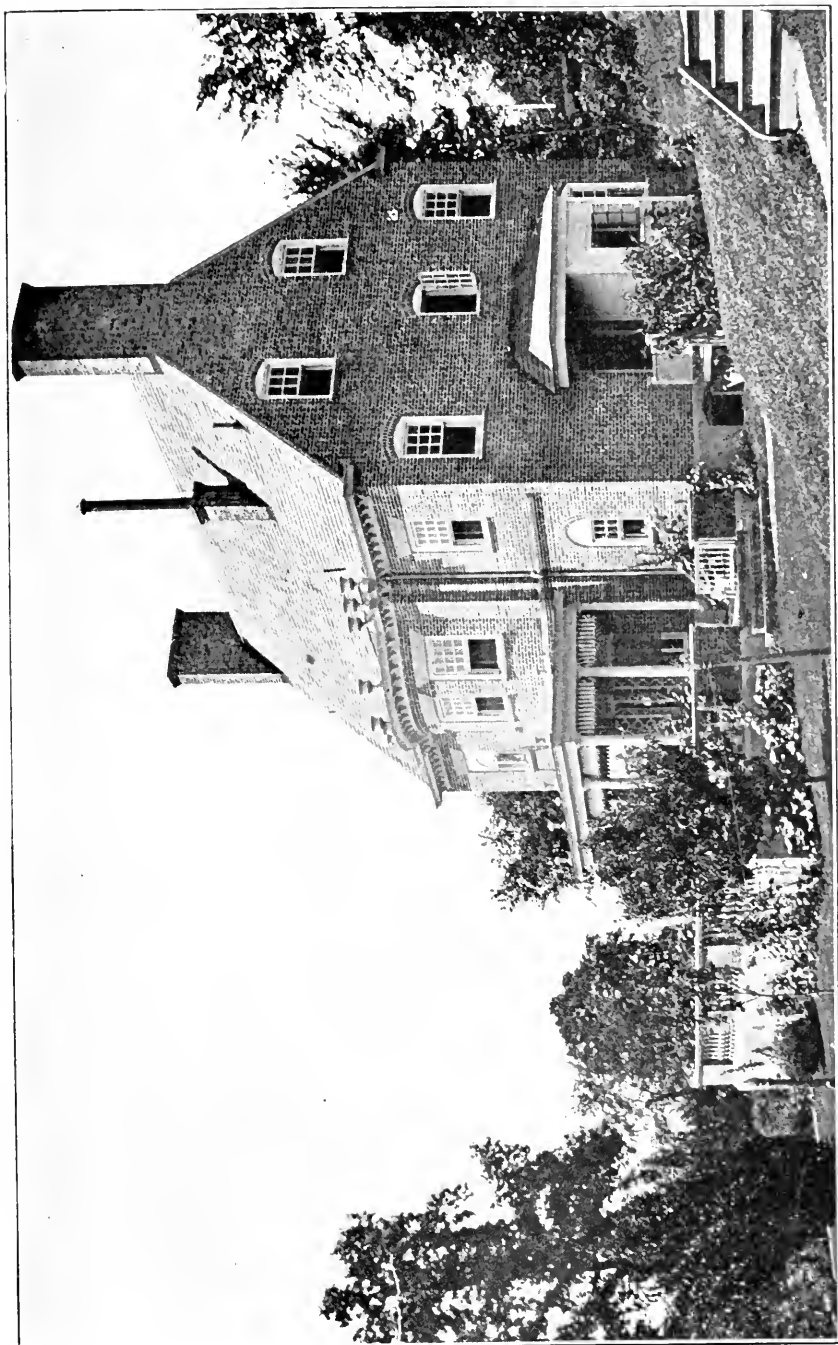
Certainly it is unfamiliar environment from which one's mind naturally reverts to his childhood (you must have had a childhood)—reverts to the wondrous houses we visited in the impressionable days of long ago. Ah, they were a very different kind of houses, were they not?—houses with significance, houses with personality, if building material may ever be said to incorporate that. They had a history to tell. They had legends, too. As we think of them they seem to have been literally covered with legends, some of them

American Renaissance

cut with the jack-knife deep in the attic timbers. But they were all legends that appeal to happiness. They were not the legends of tombs. And the old sensations come back to us again. Perhaps it is just as the afternoon light begins to fail so that we can no longer read, and the sunset is very beautiful.

No, no, the vagaries of geometrical invention will never supplant those first loves!

For you, then, when your lamp is lighted—I hope it is not the dazzling, 16-candle-power electric bulb of commercialism, made still further terrifying by a gorgeous glass globe—for you I have a treat in store to soothe the nerves the newly-invented architecture has indescribably rasped. It is a “sure enough” old-fashioned house. To borrow the style of *Ik Marvel* in his “*Reveries of a Bachelor*,” I can see how you will carefully put this book where you will not miss it to show your architect in the morning. You will remember the number of the page that you do not waste the time of a busy professional man in finding the place; and this is about what you will say to him: “I do not know how good the architecture is, that



EASTOVER.

The Garden Front.

A modern development of Annapolitan architecture under the Colonial régime in Anne Arundel County, Maryland. Time of George II.

Art and Commercialism

the old house on Benefit Street in Providence represents (Plate VII); but I do know it has just the atmosphere that reaches the inner man, and that is the atmosphere I want."

But not every architect is able to give you this atmosphere (Plate X). None of the architectural schools teach it, and commercialism in some form usually doles out the architect's bread and butter, so that he is accustomed in his work to reduce your proposition to a cold calculation of so much house for so much money. He is made to *smile grimly* (with Mr. R. H. Davis's kind permission) over what he considers your sentimental impracticality, then says: "We build houses by the cubic foot, you know." And after the size, position, number of rooms, etc., are determined, then, whatsoever art may be applied just as well as not without materially adding to the cost is made to serve as the meek handmaid of commercialism; and I must say of this applied art as we see it every day, exemplified in America, it certainly looks the part.

All through the Berkshires, wherever a commanding eminence rises in the midst of natural loveliness, the

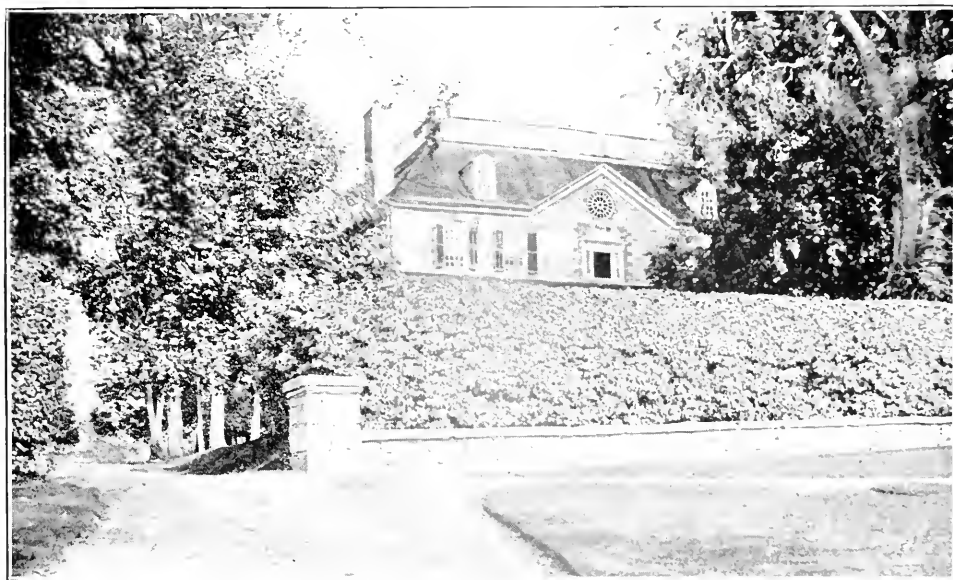
American Renaissance

bristling odd conceits—they are not art—of the prodigious captain of industry who has made his money by always “driving three in a buggy,” testifies that even in his dwelling-place he calculates to get the worth of every dollar, and every dollar is made to show—a veritable monument to his commercial sagacity. But to my mind, Sharon in Connecticut, which lies some fifty miles, perhaps, to the southward of the Berkshires, is the most beautiful inland village we have in New England. Architecturally, it is not remarkable either for good or bad work; but toward the lower end of the main street there is one startling beauty in the fabric of the John Cotton Smith manse. (See illustrations, Plates X and XXXIV.) As an appreciative tenant is about vacating, I suppose the envious eyes of commercialism will soon light upon this charming exemplar of Colonial days with an idea of adding extensions, verandas or what not to make it “real stylish like.” But for once, commercialism will be disappointed, for I am told that money will not buy the Cotton Smith house.

The despoiler of beautiful landmarks, however, is



NOT EVERY ARCHITECT IS ABLE TO GIVE YOU THIS ATMOSPHERE.



MONEY WILL NOT BUY THE COTTON SMITH HOUSE.

Art and Commercialism

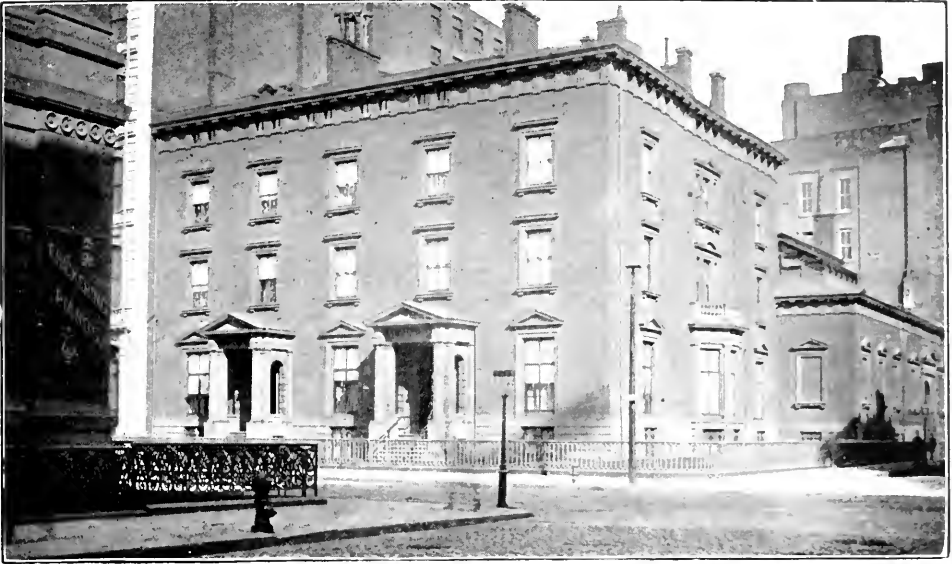
rarely idle. He knocks first at one door, and then at the next. New houses or old, it makes no difference so long as the design be good, and worth spoiling. The Cotton Smith mansion is one bright particular exception that goes to prove the rule, for, ordinarily, commercialism suffers no rebuke, and especially is this true of New York City. Here, whatever commercialism wants it takes without more ado. A "sky-scraper" would pay the owners of the northeast corner of Fifth Avenue and Eighteenth Street much better than the admirable and famous twin mansions (Plate XI), that until lately occupied the site, so this good architecture was promptly sacrificed to an object which is sordid and mean.

But into what absurdities will the all-worshipful rate per cent. theory, which is conducive of such splendid quantity and such meagre quality, not eventually lead us? Already, we have a "flat-iron building" which I have seen measured by art standards in a contemporary review. I mean to say that such a thing was, in all good faith, attempted. We find the opinion expressed that the "flat-iron building" was a necessity, and as a necessity we should endeavor to make art harmonize

American Renaissance

with it somehow. In all the hardness of our hearts we accept the greedy commercial theory, as the people of Moses accepted the divorce bill, that "sky-scrapers" are a necessity; but they are not. We should be unquestionably better off without them. They are only the lame device of the epoch in which we live to facilitate business until such time as we shall interfere with our neighbor's daylight beyond all endurance, and here we must perforce desist. Well, one may toady to commercialism himself, if he likes—if he conceives that such a course is really going to be to his advantage; but he cannot make art do it.

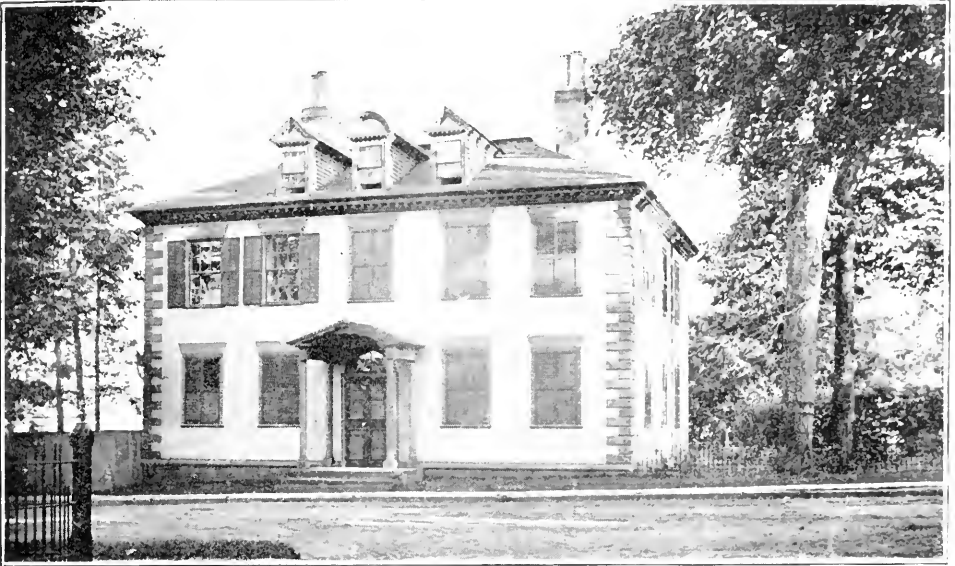
To the contrary, art is itself a very jealous god, and does not permit the serving of two masters, at least, two such antithetical masters as itself and commercialism. Art demands that there shall be, first, a sinking fund absolutely within its own control, irrevocable, and forever charged off the commercial ledger. Commercialism has no adequate sum of money that is available for the purpose. Because we define art as dexterity and as cunning, we have been determined to make it fit the exigencies of commercialism; but we



VICTIMS OF COMMERCIALISM.
The Belmont Houses, Fifth Ave. and 18th St.



CHIMNEY-PIECE, AMERICAN RENAISSANCE, MODERN.
Designed by T. HENRY RANDALL, Architect.



THE SIMPLICITY OF ART.
The Wadsworth House, Middletown, Conn.



EFFLORESCENCE OF COMMERCIALISM.

Library
California

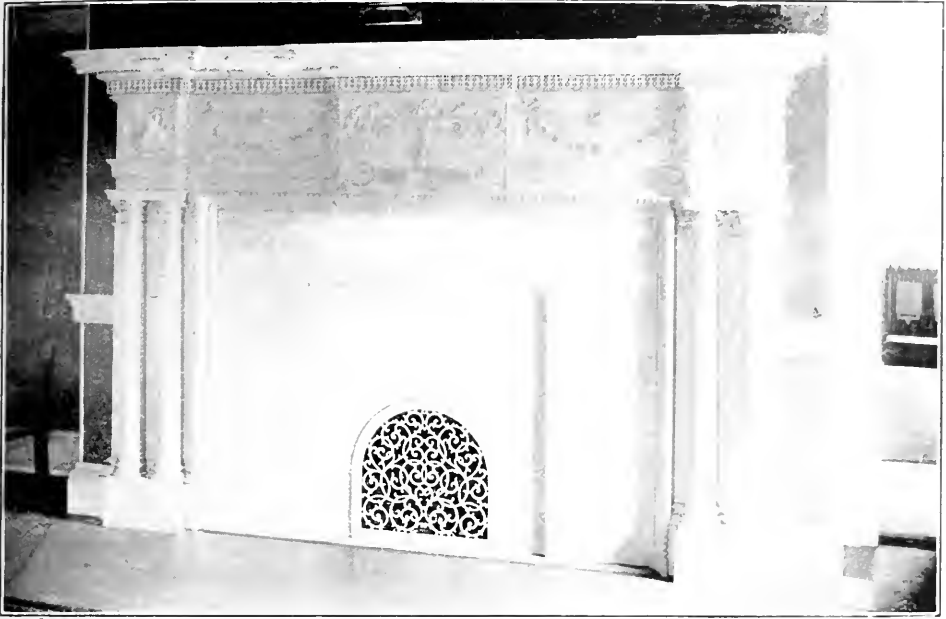
Art and Commercialism

have not succeeded. It is, indeed, a grand misfit, because we do not define art rightly. Yet people appear not to want to divine the true definition, no doubt on account of a well-founded premonition that it is going to be an unequivocal rebuke to the selfishness that exacts a certain rate per cent. of return out of everything. Commercialism may defer, but cannot defeat, the enevitable. Art means charity. Now if it were only that kind of charity which the lexicon of commercialism defines as the giving of tithes of whatever a man possesses to the poor, we could still manage as did a certain rich young man we have read about in the lesson. And like him, not being entirely satisfied in our consciences nor with results, we could demand, as did he, what we yet lack, what latent phase of cunning we have overlooked? And it will then become our turn to be the exceeding sorrowful party, for there is no cunning about it. What this generation yet lacks—we have quite everything else—is a sufficiency of the vast, comprehensive form of charity that was intended to be the end and object of every life. That is the synonym of art.

CHAPTER III

THE ANCIENT RÉGIME AND—ANDREW JACKSON

VENERATION for ancestors, and for what ancestors knew, has not been regarded as an American virtue. Yet there was a time entirely beyond the memory of this generation when traditions were religiously handed down and respected in America. It is heresy to suppose that the Colonial builders were *au fait* in the science of æsthetics. They were not. There was more excuse for ignorance upon their part than there is for ignorance upon ours; but architecture as a fine art was as little understood by the farmer at large in pre-revolutionary times as is evidenced by the modern farmer whose concrete ideas upon the subject are so charmingly set forth in the curiosity I have been fortunate to secure for this chapter (Plate XVIII). Only, no Colonial farmer would have dared to perpetuate such originality, even though he dreamed it in his



MANTELPiece, AMERICAN RENAISSANCE, EPOCH 1866.



BOTH NAME AND IDENTITY OF ITS DESIGNER HAVE IN ALL PROBABILITY
BEEN IRRETRIEVABLY MISLAID IN OBLIVION, BUT HE WAS AN ARCHITECT.

Orne-Ropes' House, Salem.

The Ancient Régime and—Andrew Jackson

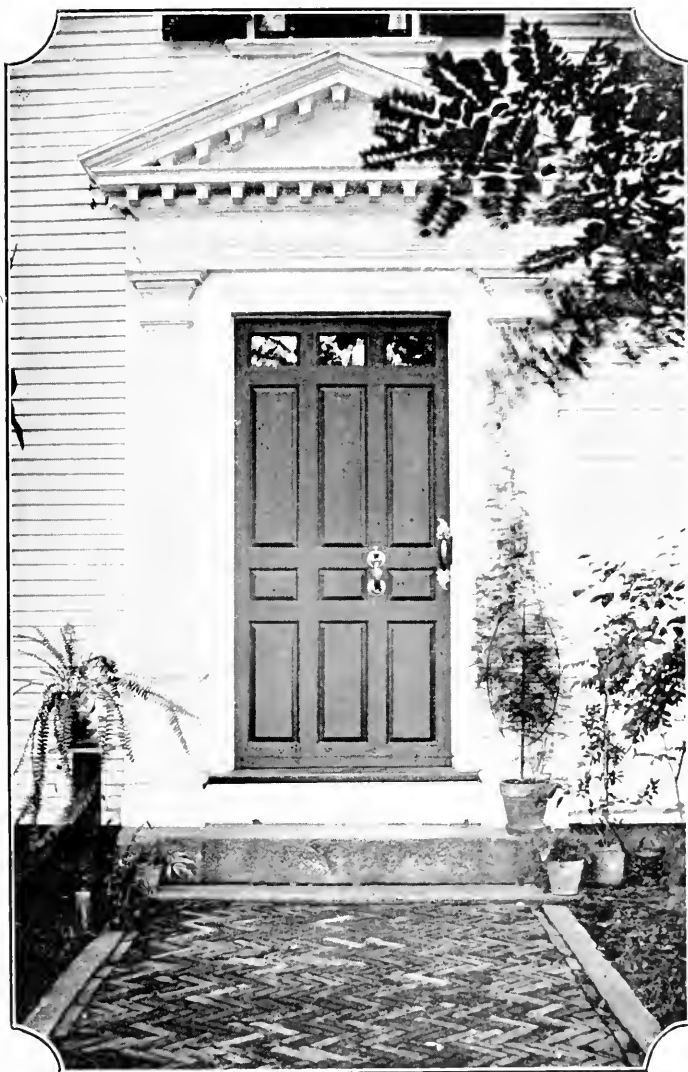
dreams, which is the only way he could possibly have conceived it. The unalienable right of the American citizen to build whatever he pleases has precedents running backward only to the 4th of March, 1829, when that popular hero, General Andrew Jackson, was inaugurated. This appears to have been the red-flag signal of license for all the vast output of American Jacobin architecture, which, of course, is not to be confused with the *Jacobean* of England, the seemingly innocent contraction of the suffix having the effect of a disenchanter's wand.

Previous to this advent of rabid democracy there lingered a vestige of a certain code of social restrictions which once regulated architecture almost as absolutely as it did the private affairs of every family in the land. Once upon a time the house-builder would have no more thought of departing from what I shall call "the straight and narrow path" of precedent in architecture than he would have been guilty of a religious defection such as wilfully absenting himself from meeting, or an ethical defection such as purposely remaining single. This abrogation of personal liberty bore rather roughly,

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perhaps, upon the individual; but it was the very salvation of architecture, being the censorship to which we are indebted for whatever true inspiration we are enabled to draw out of the Colonial exemplars. "Precept" was the word upon which the American Renaissance was founded. The Colonial builders builded as they were taught to build, not as they may have wished to experiment. And let us see, for a moment, who their masters were, that we may be in a position to understand something of the reason for their success.

While, in olden times, the architect and the builder were often united in the same person, it must have been a very differently equipped individual from the one who awaits his customers behind the pretentious signboard thus lettered which nowadays adorns the front of many a contractor's place of business; because this legend has come to mean extreme mediocrity in both callings. Nor does the word "architect" alone signify everything it should in a great commercial era such as ours. I have heard the head draughtsman of a noted modern architectural office in New York City distinguish one of his principals from the other partners



DOORWAY, MEANS' HOUSE, AMHERST, N. H.

The Ancient Régime and—Andrew Jackson

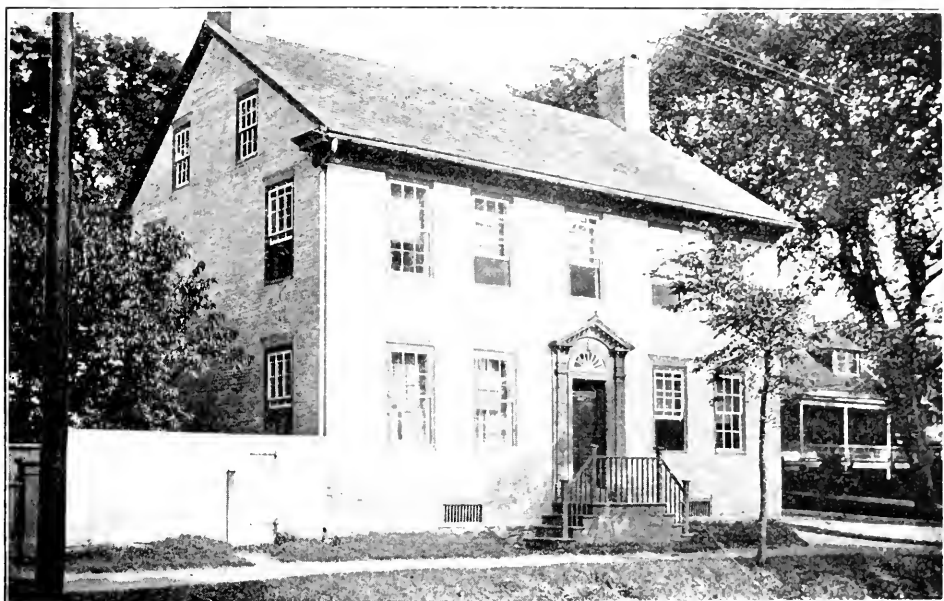
of the firm by a very significant expression, viz.: "Mr. — is an *architect*." And I am constrained to discriminate with equal severity when I see the illustration of the usual "modern American house," so called, placed in "deadly parallel column" beside a Colonial exemplar erected a century ago. Nobody, as a rule, can inform us who made the drawings of our fascinating prototype. Both name and identity of its designer have, in all probability, been irretrievably mislaid in oblivion; but he was an *architect*! (See Plate XIII).

In some recent and necessary researches for this and other work I have run across the names of a few of these architects. Their biographies are not to be found in libraries, though they merit shelf-room beside those of our greatest heroes, statesmen and authors. Samuel McIntyre of Salem, Massachusetts, and Russell Warren of Bristol, Rhode Island, respectively, are *two* I could mention in particular that should be done up in full levant with notes and comments upon their work and times, edited by Mr. Russell Sturgis or some one else equally competent to do so. And then the fun

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of it was that many a most refined and skilful artificer of the ancient *régime* never considered the propriety of adding the word "Architect" to his subscription. I suppose he fancied he lacked his diploma or the requisite reputation afforded by some stupendous public work. Yet, Fouquet with his celebrated *Vaux le Vicomte*, or Louis XIV at Versailles had no better architectural advice than had the colonists of America. The greatest architects of the world really directed the planning of the Colonial houses. Unseen, the master-hands and minds were working through the agency of deferential and obedient apprentices.

These apprentices essayed no—what boys denominate—"stunts" (see Plate XV), and their masters, to whom they frequently served life-long apprenticeships, affected no "stunts" either. Sir Christopher Wren, himself, and Inigo Jones never tried "*stunts*," nor did Palladio in Italy, before them, nor even the great Michelangelo. Now, if there ever was an architect justified in exploiting "*stunts*," it was Michelangelo, to whom marble or pigments, chisels or brushes were as subservient as to magic. But what did this archi-



THESE APPRENTICES ESSAYED NO STUNTS.
Munro-French House, Bristol, R. I. A. D. 1800.



AN ANCIENT FARMHOUSE AT DURHAM, CONN.

The Ancient Régime and—Andrew Jackson

tectural giant do when summoned to Rome to look after the construction of St. Peter's? In the eyes of American commercialism, he made a goose of himself, he simply missed the chance of his life. He waived jealousy, he waived ambition, patronage and emolument because he preferred the serving of God and of his art to the serving of self. Fancy such a thing in our day! Michelangelo requested that all the plans of his illustrious predecessor, Bramante, the original designer of the cathedral, be brought to him; and fully appreciating the responsibility of the complex work that had descended to him by the rightful heirship of true art, Michelangelo emphatically declared he conceived it to be his duty to carry forward Bramante's design, and, moreover, that wherever the intercedent tinkers had departed from this design, just so much had they erred. How strange this policy sounds placed in contrast to the ethics of American expediency! No doubt, the mighty Renaissance fabric at Rome has lost inestimably because this remarkable man could not live to complete it. In our day, we have changed all that. The main chance is not now *art—it is money*. We are still

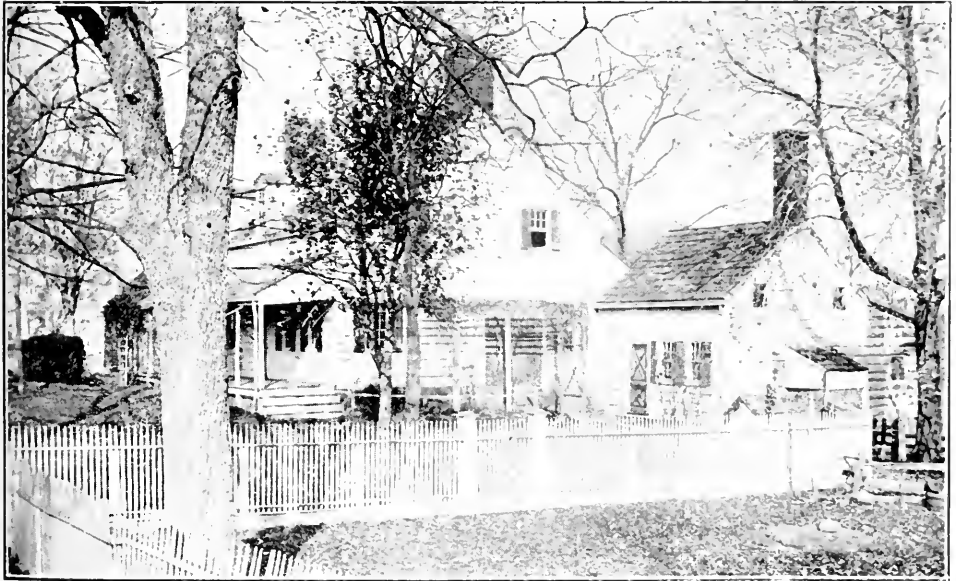
American Renaissance

the America of Martin Chuzzlewit plus population. Our greatest architect is our greatest "stunt-master" and bears to American commercialism the same relationship that a certain society leader bears to his equally noted patroness. And it does not require the perspicacity of a Voodoo woman either, to see how ephemeral, in comparison to the ages of good architectural development, is this modern American extravaganza, which, not unlike the airy creatures who enjoyed existence in the dream of the White-King in Lewis Carroll's classic, "Through the Looking Glass," is liable to go out of vogue *bang!* at any moment, upon his majesty's—or rather upon *true art's*—awakening.

In Plate XV there is presented a type of American farm-house of the early eighteenth century. Engraved upon a tablet let into the front wall of the chimney-stack appears the impressive date 1727. This house is still standing in an admirable state of preservation nearby a quaint old village called Durham, in Connecticut. It was erected by a man named Miles Merwin, and a lineal descendant of its builder still occupies it. When he visited this house last summer the interior



SO FAR AS TEACHING ARCHITECTURAL ART IS CONCERNED, IT MUST BE
ADMITTED OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN A DEAD FAILURE.



TYPE OF FARMHOUSE, EPOCH END OF 18TH CENTURY.

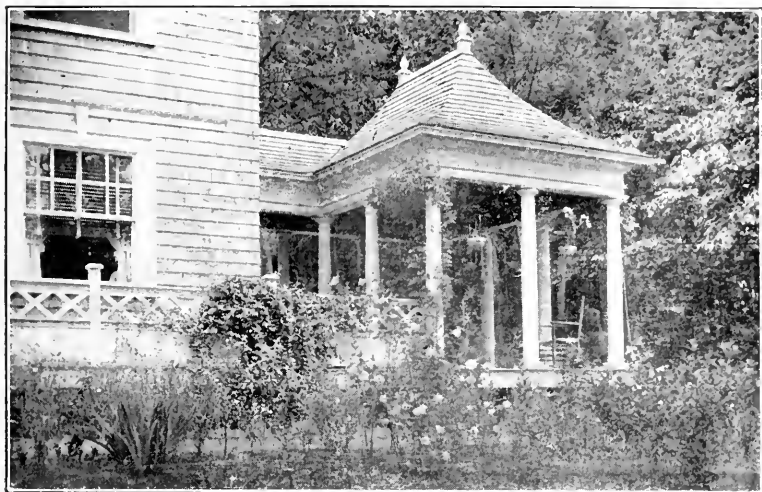
The Ancient Régime and—Andrew Jackson

impressed the writer fully as much as the exterior. It seemed to me that the same influence came back again that rushed over my senses when first I beheld the worn steps to the royal tombs at Westminster. It was so very old and replete with atmosphere! It had so much history to tell that one's most natural inclination was to sit down quickly upon the roughly hewn doorsteps bedabbled by streaks of sunlight filtering through the foliage, and just listen. Ah, how ridiculous it would be to imagine that the wonderfully satisfying lines of the roof, the delicious overhang of the gable, the relationship of the stone chimney and the proportions generally were evolved by Miles Merwin himself, out of a printed book upon the æsthetics of design! For neither Miles Merwin nor his master-builder may be said to have originated the house they erected. I do not fancy, for one moment, that they ever contemplated such an ill-advised departure from precedent. They had been taught how to construct three or four different kinds of roofs, and they simply selected the one most suitable to the needs of this case. It was the influence and teaching of more than one great architect

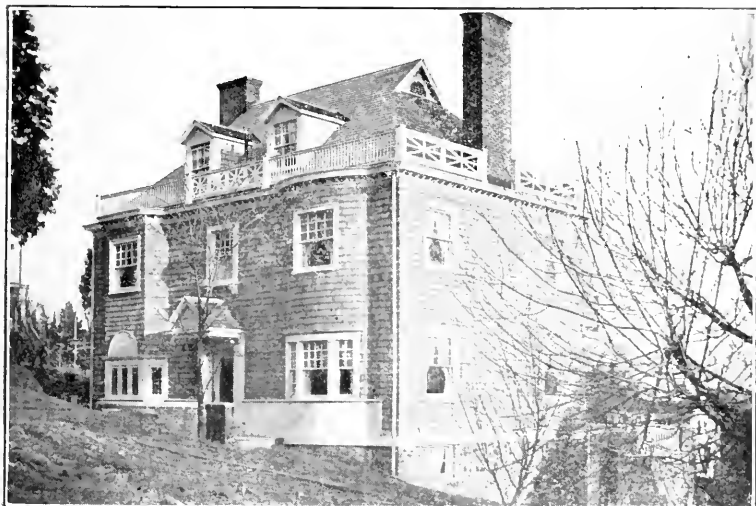
American Renaissance

that designed the ancient farm-house at Durham. And now you need no longer conjecture why Colonial architecture is so good and remains in fashion. You know.

Select, if you please, the detail of the hooded entrance. A modern house-builder requested to supply some unique shelter for the doorway would understand you to mean that you wished him to invent something which, by the way, is a task infinitely agreeable to the modern practitioner. It is safe to aver that the adviser of Miles Merwin, whoever he was, had never invented anything in his life. He would not have dared to try the experiment in architecture, at any rate, more than had he been the indentured apprentice of a Florentine architect. Although I can, very easily, imagine him quoting his grandsire that this particular kind of hood he was recommending to his principal, with its deep cornice, was an exceptionally rigid and durable one. The truth of which observation time has sufficiently demonstrated. It was "Old Hickory" who issued the emancipation proclamation to young America absolving him from the time-honored and universal fealty to Art. But young America was deceived: it was a cam-



PERISTYLE TO A HOUSE IN WYOMING, N. J., 1897.



AMERICAN RENAISSANCE, 1899.

The Ancient Régime and—Andrew Jackson

paign lie. Young America was not emancipated at all. Another master was set over him, and that master was unrelenting expediency, who forthwith usurped the throne of deposed art. Perhaps we are just beginning to suspect the ruse after seventy-five years of license and anarchy in art matters. What we did was simply to exchange a legitimate sovereign for a coarse, unlettered and brutal demagogue, of whom every American, young and old, by this time, should be heartily ashamed.

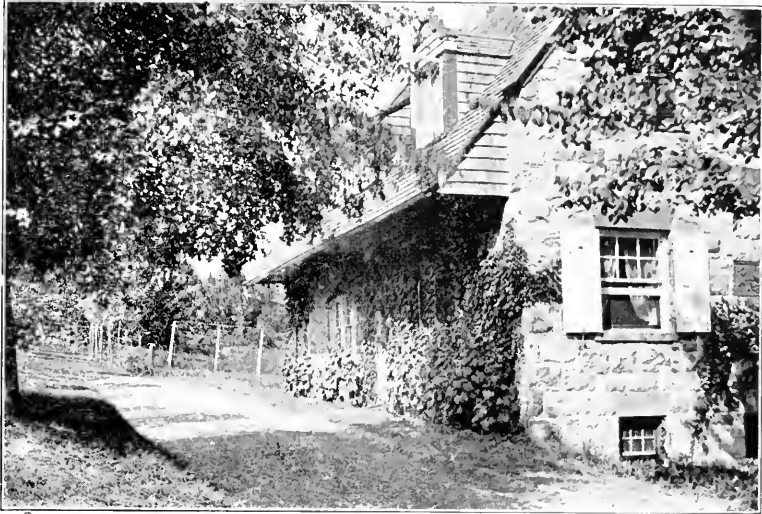
And I think the present generation is somewhat ashamed notwithstanding the fact that our modern system of public instruction, liberal as it purports to be, is painfully lame in the department of the arts. They are like so many sealed books to the scholars who are expected to shape our history. The policy of Donna Inez in Byron's great epic was to withhold natural history only from her son's course of studies. Our policy is to disseminate all the natural history available. The mixed class in physiology recites its lessons unblushingly. We encourage the sciences. The farmer builds his house, to-day, with the best of sanitary arrangements; they are nearly perfect, he installs hot-water

American Renaissance

heaters and electric lights, he keeps in touch with the moving procession upon all points save one.—What does he know about Art and American Renaissance ?

The example of modern farm-house (Plate XVI) herewith respectfully submitted indicates the modern farmer's limitations. So far as teaching architectural art is concerned, it must be admitted that our public schools have been a dead failure.

But let us not look upon these things too gloomily, and lest the reader, by this time, discover some sinister intention upon my part to slur the memory of the hero of New Orleans, I wish to state that, personally, I have only the greatest respect and admiration for a man who positively refused to be frightened. Like Napoleon, Jackson was unquestionably the man for the hour—the times, and devilishly bad times they must have been by 1837 to have grown inimical to the very commercial interests that had let them loose. By their aid, however, are we not permitted to see ourselves somewhat as others see us, so at last, we shall have discovered the true mission of these times in the economy of art ?



DETAIL, PRINCESSGATE. 1896.



A little learning is a dangerous thing ;
Drink deep, or taste not, the Pierian spring ;
For shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
But drinking largely sobers us again.



WYCK, GERMANTOWN. EPOCH, A. D. 1700.

"The charm that is not deducible by mathematics." MISS POLLY FAIRFAX.

CHAPTER IV

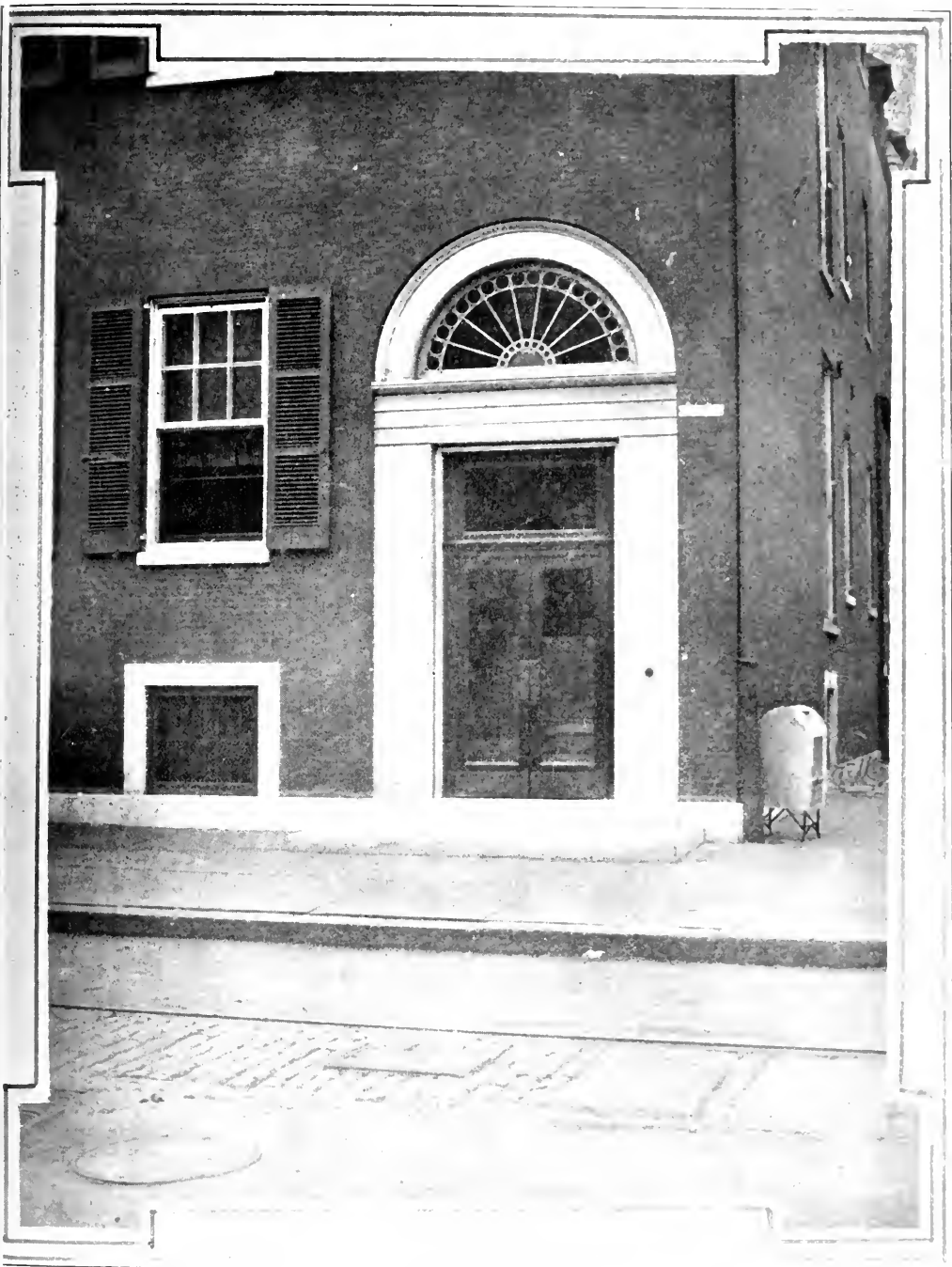
HUMBLE BEGINNINGS OF A NATIONAL SCHOOL

IT is unfair to place these humble beginnings of American Renaissance beside such highly developed architecture, for example, as English "Country Life" exploits week after week, under its heading of "Country Homes, Gardens, Old and New" as to make one believe that England must have an unlimited store for the magazine to draw upon. And this is all the more remarkable because one's recollection of English landscape as it reveals itself through windows of the railway carriages along the main routes of travel—especially along the Great Eastern road from London to Kings Lynn—distinguishes it little from that uninteresting stretch of country which lies between Trenton and New Brunswick on the Pennsylvania railroad. Evidently, all these magnificent halls were erected long before the advent of railways, and are in no way affli-

American Renaissance

ated with the vulgar wake of commercialism. Accessibility, which governs so largely in America, must be a matter of supreme indifference to possessors of great estates in England, or, it seems to me, the railway lines would meander in such a manner as closely to skirt the confines of a magnificent demesne, occasionally. It is unfair to a country whose visible architectural development is barely two centuries old to bring it in contrast with one where no building is really ancient without a history dating backward three or four hundred years, at least.

We, perhaps, fancy we have in America some modern country estates quite worth while mentioning and which might easily withstand the odious ordeal of comparison; but can the reader name one in the same category with such a country seat as is illustrated in "Country Life" for July 12, 1902, described as "Osmaston Manor, Derbyshire" (Plate XXVI)?—and this is a number of the periodical picked up without especial selection—"Biltmore," in the North Carolina mountains, possibly, with the H. W. Poor house at Tuxedo, New Jersey, as an alternate choice, one French



Extreme & humble, yet center of

DOORWAY, PHILADELPHIA CLUB,
13th and Walnut Streets.

Humble Beginnings of a National School

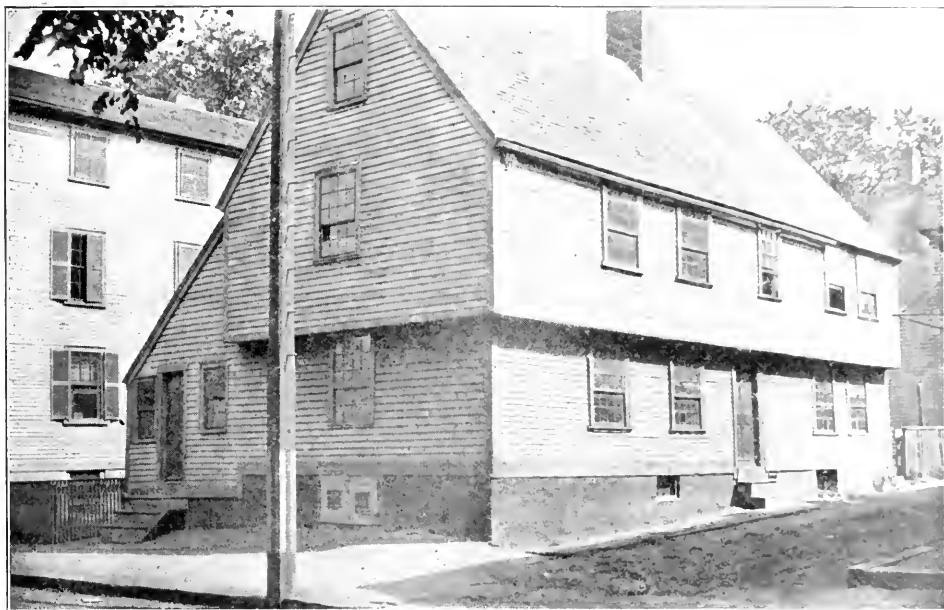
Renaissance, the other Jacobean. But certainly, Newport, with its miserable crowding and elbowing of American pretentiousness, much of the pretentiousness belonging to the modern invention type of architecture, offers no comparison at all. The Hunnewell gardens and some others we have seen photographed and discussed of late look more like tree nurseries than Renaissance gardens, while nearly all the modern American show places illustrated from time to time in the different magazines deal only with that primitive kind of splendor indigenous to provinces.

No, we may not compare American Renaissance after this manner. We are entirely too young a nation for that kind of architecture which presupposes a renowned antiquity which we lack. But what we may do becomingly is to select the homely and humble cottages of Great Britain, such cottages as the one we are shown where lived the poet Robert Burns, for instance. Place those, if you please, beside the farmhouses of our Colonial régime, and then you may be surprised to find we have something to be proud of, even though it be the fashion to belittle these essentially good antece-

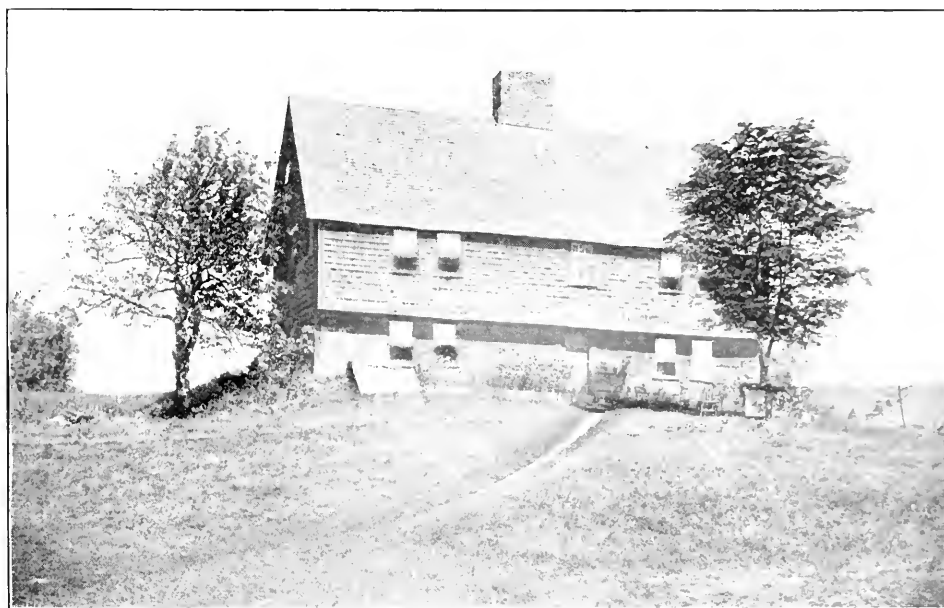
American Renaissance

dents by modern architectural scholars. I am reminded herein of the story that is told of a noted professor of music—Kullak, who, having discovered that the number on the programme which the orchestra had rendered to the great delight of everyone, was a Strauss waltz (it must have been one of the less known as “Autumn Leaves,” it could not have been the hackneyed “Blue Danube,” which has been so much overrated), turned to his pupils, ever loyal to their master’s prejudices, beside him, and furtively whispered, “Well, don’t say anything about it, boys; but it’s awfully nice!” The sentiment thus expressed is the cultivated sentiment of the average architect toward the early Renaissance of America. He appears to be constrained by some artificial position—some pedantic make-believe that allows him to acknowledge the merit of a Witch-Colonial exemplar (see Plate XXI), with only the poorest kind of grace.

But I have already explained why the old stuff remaining in America is so “awfully nice” as to charm all unprejudiced artists who have studied our history, so that mystery about it, I trust, need be no



DERBY-WARD HOUSE, SALEM, MASS. 17TH CENTURY.



SOUVENIR OF ABIGAIL AND DELIVERANCE HOBBS (TWO ALLEGED WITCHES),
OF TOPSFIELD, MASS. 17TH CENTURY.

Humble Beginnings of a National School

longer. The paramount business in hand is to get rid of American nonsense, to put it entirely out of the head, if possible, that nothing may stand in the way of returning meekly and in a receptive spirit to those ancient and honorable first principles of ours which were unerring. This surgical-like operation accomplished, let us see what may be done with the Derby-Ward house, erected A. D. 1680 in Salem (Plate XXI), to make it habitable, convenient and desirable to-day.

At this stage of the art of house-building, upon which subject there has been so much written and published, an architect would yet be considered plumb crazy who had the temerity to submit such a picture to a prospective client as the kind of house best suited to his needs. Yet, why not? Has the reader no imagination? Can he not see how, given a generous forecourt, with prim flower beds, a brick walk and box, this frowning prototype of "Scarlet Letter" morals and punishment would take on a very different aspect, its repelling severity mollified by a little gracious environment? And we do not stop here, by any means. We make a feature of the entrance, either by the aid

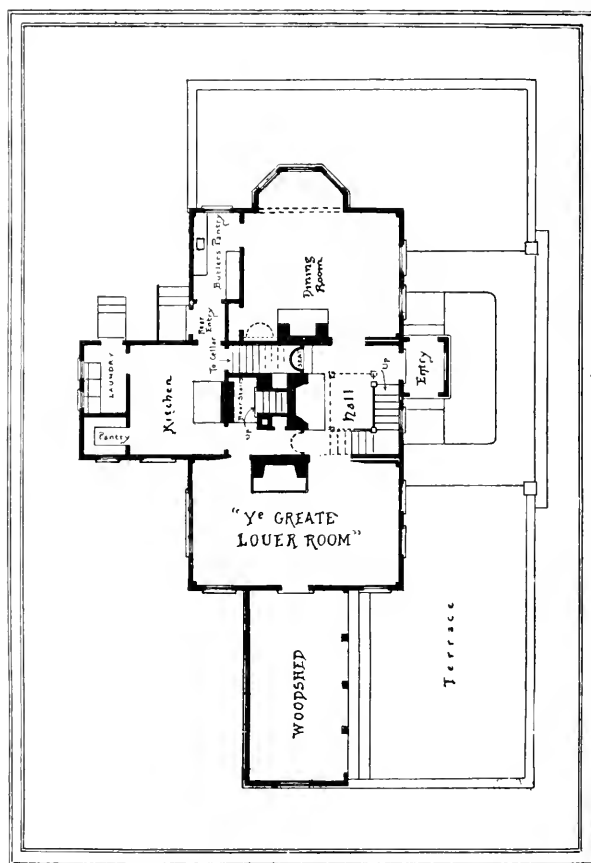
Humble Beginnings of a National School

only contracts we have signed with modern invention. All the rest has been of the most conservative architectonic development.

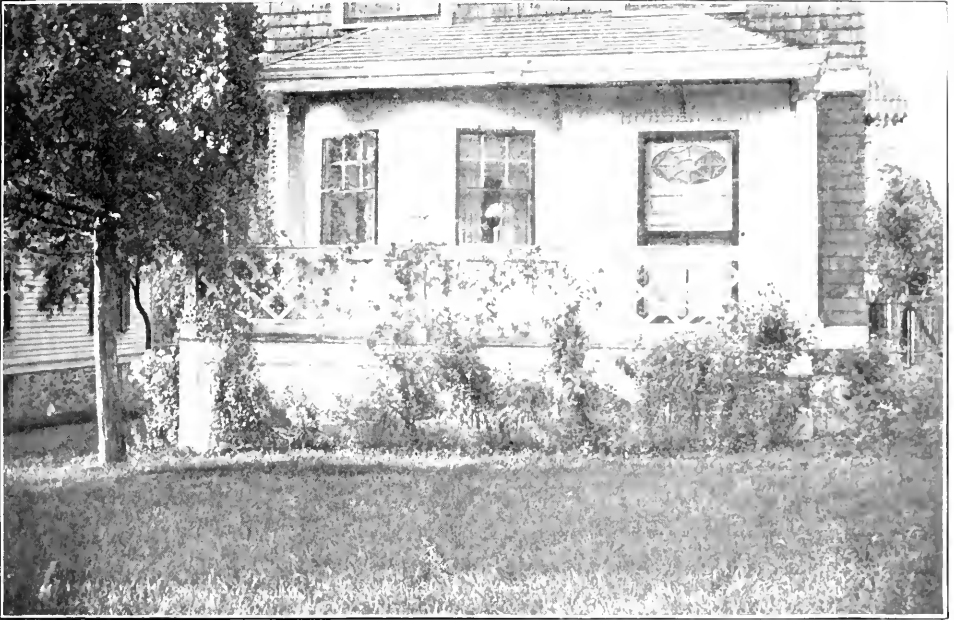
“But the plans! One has to live in the house after it is built, you know. Can you make it liveable with only the one chimney, and that in the very centre?” we are asked. I think we can. Let me submit one solution of the problem, at any rate, and you are quite at liberty to take it home and improve upon it as much as you please.

These Witch-houses are the pioneers of the procession. Nothing older than they has been able to withstand the vicissitudes of our erratic climate's racket, though contemporary with them are the early houses of Connecticut, which have been admirably described in a book by Norman M. Isham, A.M., and Albert F. Brown. The Sumner house at Middletown, illustrated herewith (Plate XXIV), exhibits a method of construction which I believe is peculiar to the State of Connecticut alone. It consists of a 3-inch offset at the second story, and continuing around the four sides, the gables projecting 3 inches more. A great central chim-

American Renaissance



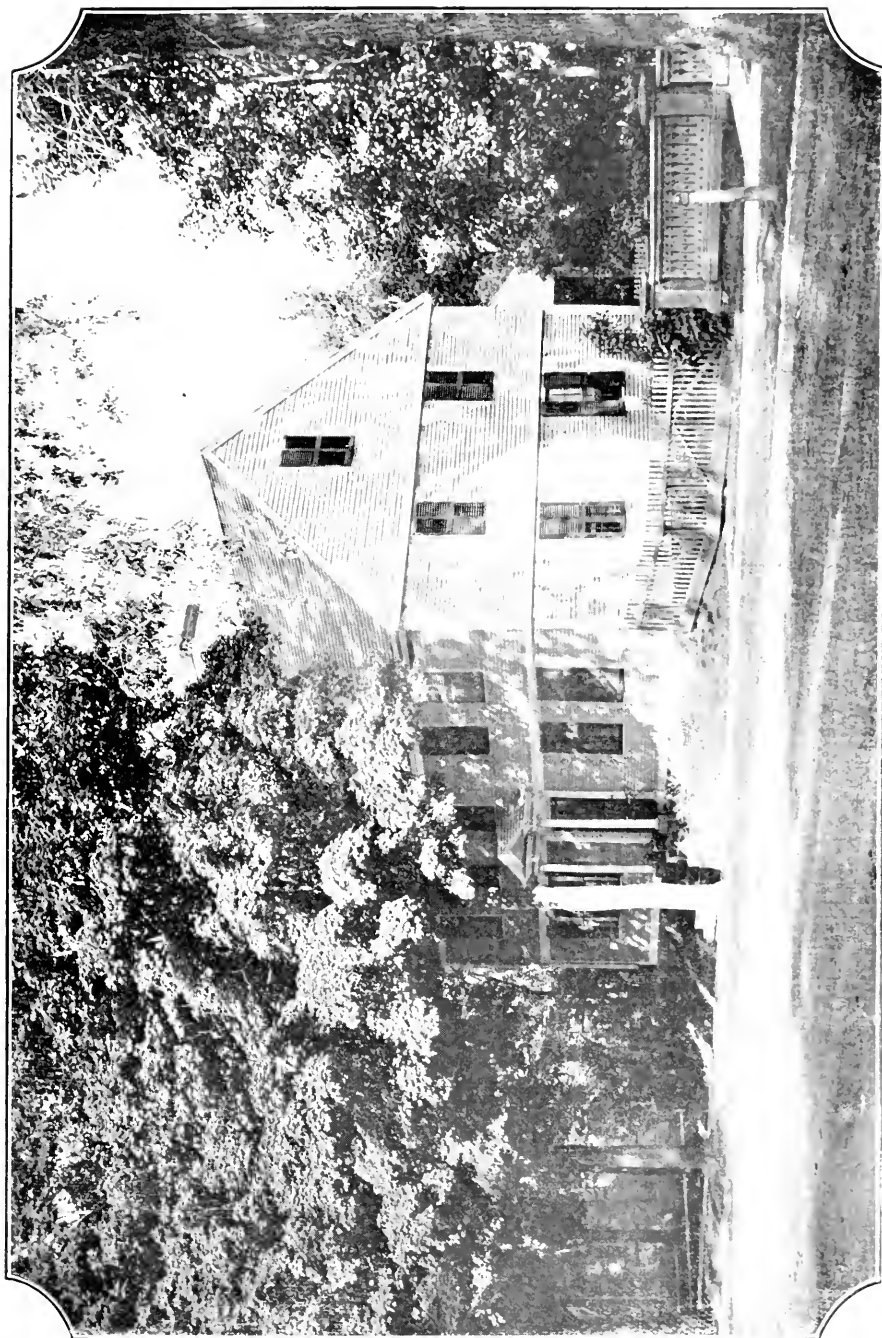
A MODERN DEVELOPMENT OF WITCH-HOUSE—PLAN



GERMANTOWN MOTIVE APPLIED TO A MODERN COTTAGE.



TYPE OF EARLY CONNECTICUT HOUSE, STRATFORD, CONN.



TYPE OF EARLY CONNECTICUT HOUSE, MIDDLETOWN, CONN.

Humble Beginnings of a National School

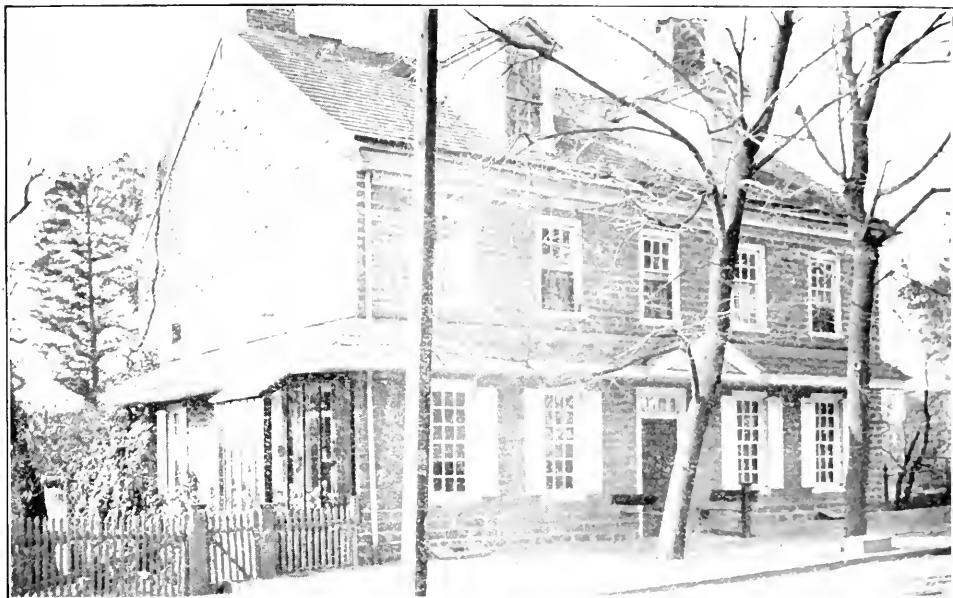
ney again dominates the plan, which, it is true, taxes modern ingenuity to make a graceful feature of the interior. A relic of old Stratford (Plate XXIII) supplies another interesting type for reincarnation. It is more generous in the matter of chimneys, but has less pitch to the roof. The photograph reveals a texture to the shingled sides which we may hardly obtain in modern work, though at a small additional cost, for the sake of art purely, we may use the wide-gauge shingles, but must see that they line accurately, as they do on the old house at Stratford. They are an unwarranted affectation, the ragged butts generally used to obtain archaic atmosphere in the houses of our time.

We shall see that in New York State and in New Jersey the Dutch influences prevailed in the early architecture, and in Pennsylvania, the German. It is all good architecture, however. The Dutch hoods are habitually at the eaves, while the German hoods which separated the first and second stories were often carried around the entire building, as flounces upon a skirt (see Plates XXV and XC). The hoods are all fascinating, thoroughly architectonic, yet how little have they

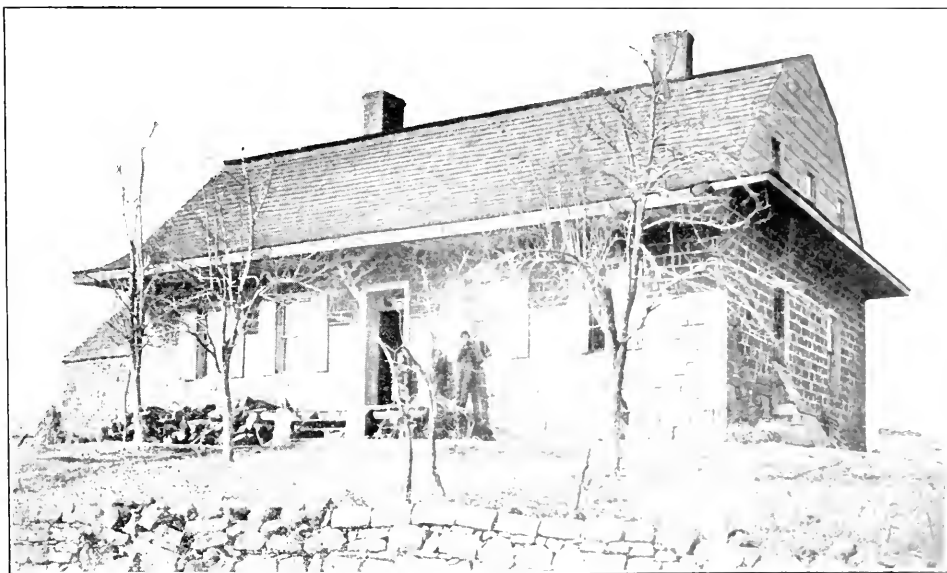
American Renaissance

been studied and developed in modern design! The niceties of their application and use are little understood by the average architect, who, ordinarily, would think he was wasting his client's money to exploit anything of the kind. You see, he forgets that his client has spiritual needs as well as physical ones. The gambrel roofs of the Dutch houses have come to be commercial commodities and are continually resorted to—no, are continually parodied, I mean to say—by modern builders who cannot tell what this immutable art principle we are talking about may be. They are simply magnificent, the roof lines of the old stone house at Hackensack, N. J., shown in Plate XXV, yet they are not good enough for the modern inventor, he must try some fancied improvement in the way of a grotesque pitch, for which he racks his brain. Of these same fancied improvements I could supply examples *ad infinitum*, but they could only pain the reader, however great a favor I might be doing American commercialism.

And now I must pause again for the present, because I am come to the doorway of Wyck at Germantown (Plate XIX), and before it the architectural critic pre-



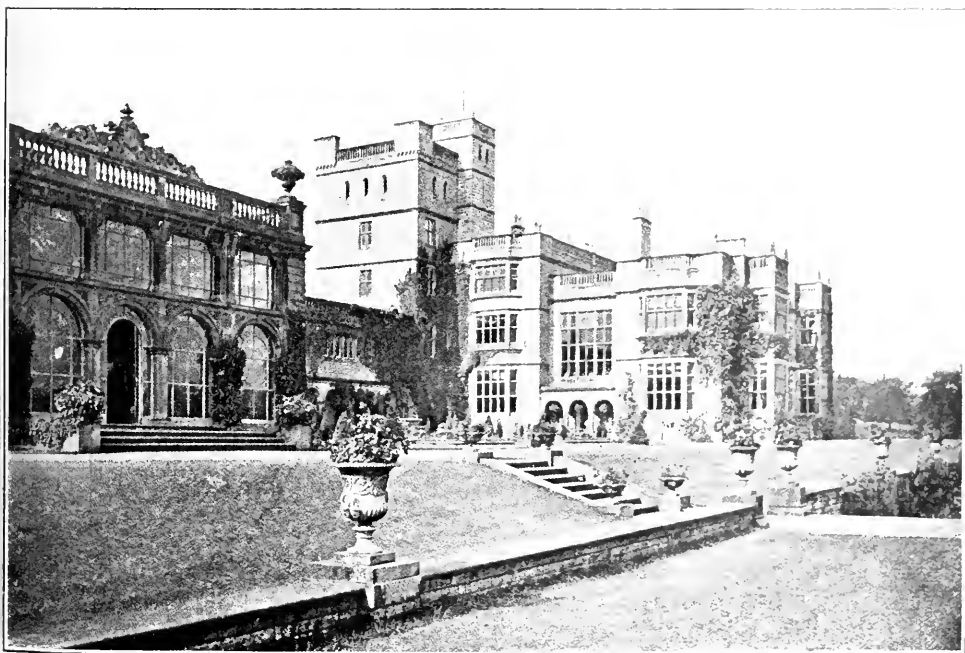
JOHNSON HOUSE, GERMANTOWN, PA.



HOUSE AT HACKENSACK, N. J. EARLY 18TH CENTURY.



HOUSE AT BOGOTA, N. J. EARLY 18TH CENTURY.



OSMASTON MANOR, DERBYSHIRE.

(From English "Country Life.")

Humble Beginnings of a National School

fers to linger in silent admiration—to fold his arms as the musical critics used to do when Patti was at the zenith of her powers, but while thoroughly enjoying every fine artistic *nuance* of the performance, a disturbing premonition reminds him—warns him that if paid to criticise and not to praise he will, in all probability, lose his employment. They have no bit of architectural detail in England that the Germantown doorway need be afraid of. Of course you will go into ecstasies over it; I do. But you will experience difficulty in finding an architect capable of grasping the idea sufficiently well for you to incorporate the charm of it in the new house you are planning to build. The modern dwelling-house is conceived so differently, plotted so differently, with unsympathetic T squares and triangles, and is governed so strictly by materials easily milled, and easily nailed in place by the carpenter, as to put that element of graciousness which signifies so much to our lives and happiness—that “charm not deducible by mathematics,” that makes us think, and whereby we eventually become better men and women in the world, absolutely beyond the pale of realization.

CHAPTER V

THE GRAND EPOCH

THEN there came a time when the legitimate development and prosperity of the colonies produced, not what the forcing box of commercialism has produced—a *moneyed class* under obligations to no one—but an *aristocracy* whose *noblesse oblige* vouchsafed the encouragement of architecture in common with other arts and refinements. And if there remain to us, yet fairly intact, a representative town of this aristocracy that we may go to look at, to-day, to see what it was like, I should say it was Anne Arundel Town (Annapolis), the ancient capital of Maryland.

The best description of Annapolis in that relation which concerns us most—its fascinating old houses and their history—is written by T. Henry Randall in the “Architectural Record” (New York), Vol. 1, No. 3. Indeed, I regard this description as the most valuable



MOUNT VERNON ON THE POTOMAC. THE MOST ORIGINAL AND REPRESENTATIVE OF COLONIAL EXEMPLARS.

The Grand Epoch

paper to American Renaissance that has appeared in periodical literature. Besides this article on Colonial Annapolis, wher in all its remarkable buildings are duly accredited and illustrated, editions *de luxe* in folio, on Colonial architecture, may also be had of the Bates & Guild Company, of Boston, publishers, containing splendid photogravures of the Chase house, the Harwood, Hammond or Lockernan house,* the Brice-Jennings house and other enchanting representatives of our most celebrated régime. These revered authorities, together with Westover, Shirley and Brandon—plantations along the James River—are so well presented in this way to architectural students that I have concluded to reserve the space at my disposal to other subjects which, while nearly as interesting, and exemplifying nearly as well the particular phase of our architectural history under discussion, have a decided advantage in that they have been little exploited (with the exception of Mt. Vernon) in books.

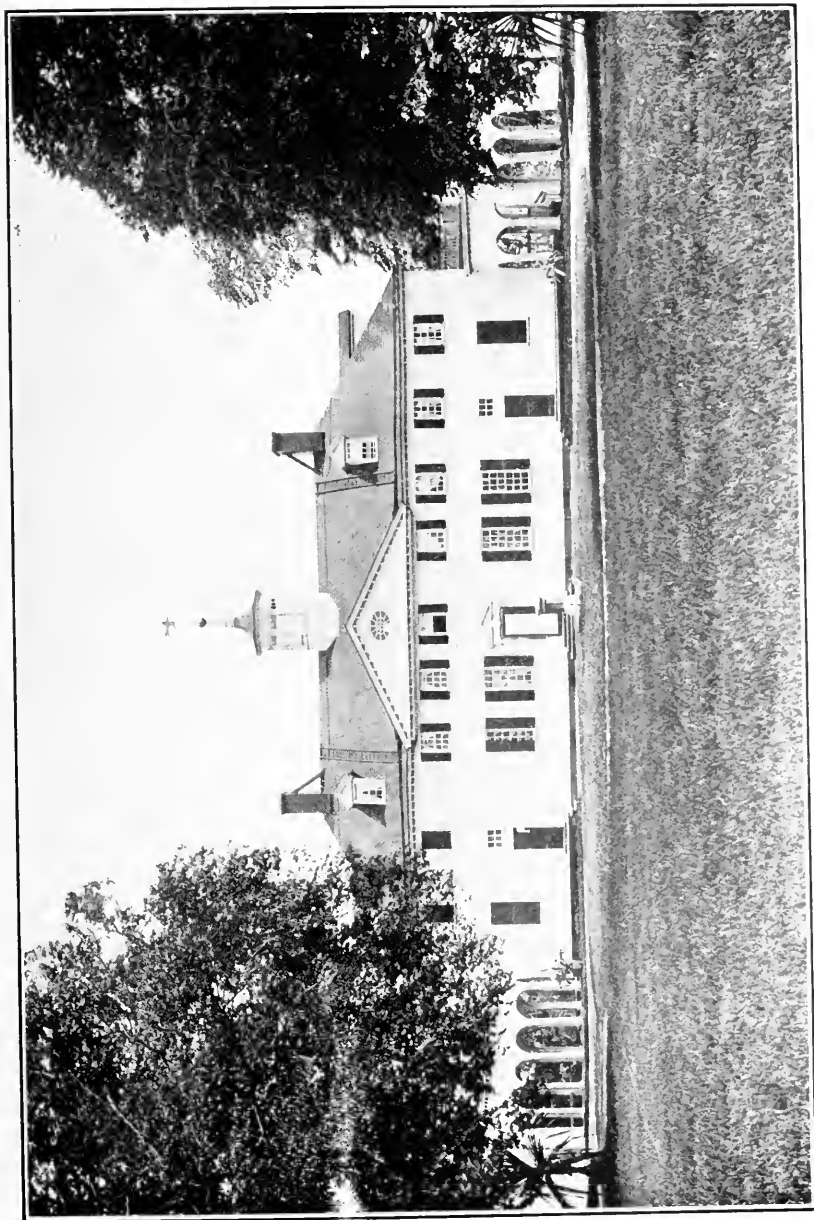
But no writer upon American Renaissance can afford to slight the subject of Annapolis in the letterpress of

* This house is known by three different names.

American Renaissance

his work, for its didactic value is immense. The very plan of its streets was formulated according to the principles of art uninfluenced in the smallest degree by America's ubiquitous ogre, commercialism, which was here relegated, by municipal ordinance, to certain extremely restricted sections of the city, beyond which it trespassed at its peril. The relation these patches of territory bore to the whole equalled, perhaps, one-fourth. In other words, the Annapolitans looked upon commercialism as the mere machinery of their household, and the idea was to sacrifice no more room to its offices than was absolutely necessary. Commercialism during the grand epoch was essentially a steward's department, and the Annapolitans would have been the last people in the world to tolerate its meddling with architecture.

Moreover, Annapolis stands for the supreme moment of the grand epoch. It was here that the treaty of peace between Great Britain and the United States was formally ratified in 1784, and here Washington went through the ceremony of returning his commission as commander-in-chief of the army to the august



MOUNT VERNON ON THE POTOMAC.
The West Front.

The Grand Epoch

power whence it had come to him. The constitution itself owes its first glory to Annapolis, where the initial proceedings were held. Annapolis and American Renaissance are, therefore, indissolubly associated. You speak of one and the other follows as a natural consequence. The amplification of the American dwelling-house was here carried to a higher degree of excellence and refinement than has been elsewhere attained, before or since, for Annapolis was practically finished by 1770, and, happily for this generation, has staid so.

It is disappointing that there should be no good place to "sup and lie"—to resuscitate, a rather poetical archaism—in Annapolis, no snug old tavern with the king's arms upon a sign-board still swinging over its door. And Annapolis, besides, is most inaccessible and expensive to reach; yet every student of American Renaissance should contrive to make, at least, one pilgrimage thither during his lifetime to gain, if possible, a better idea of the most characteristic development his national school of architecture has seen.

After Annapolis, the honors of American Renaissance are divided between a score of more or less his-

American Renaissance

toric towns, among them the Colonial capital of New Hampshire claiming especial recognition. Portsmouth also has the atmosphere which means the elixir of life to the housebuilder in quest of inspiration. To breathe this atmosphere here, at his ease, however, will cost him \$4 per day at the Rockingham; but then, what enthusiast is there who would begrudge \$4 for the sake of making the acquaintance of such a raving, tearing beauty as the house built by Capt. McPhædris in 1723 (see Plate XXX). I could tell you how the bricks to build it were all imported from England, only, this trite piece of information is so applicable to Colonial houses generally as to be of little real interest to the reader, who, I imagine, cares not at all whether the bricks were imported from Kamtschatka or manufactured in a nearby kiln. But when I say that his house cost Capt. McPhædris something like the equivalent of \$30,000, I receive instant attention, because a modern admirer might think himself warranted in exploiting an adaptation with just about one-third that sum of money. Of course, he would fail, that is, to carry out the scheme properly. The principal rooms of the first



A SALEM GATEWAY. NICHOLS' HOUSE.



HOPPIN HOUSE FROM THE CLOSE. RAREVIEW, LITCHFIELD.

to sell
August 1900

The Grand Epoch

story are paneled in wood from floor to ceiling, and the panels are beveled flush panels—the most expensive kind.

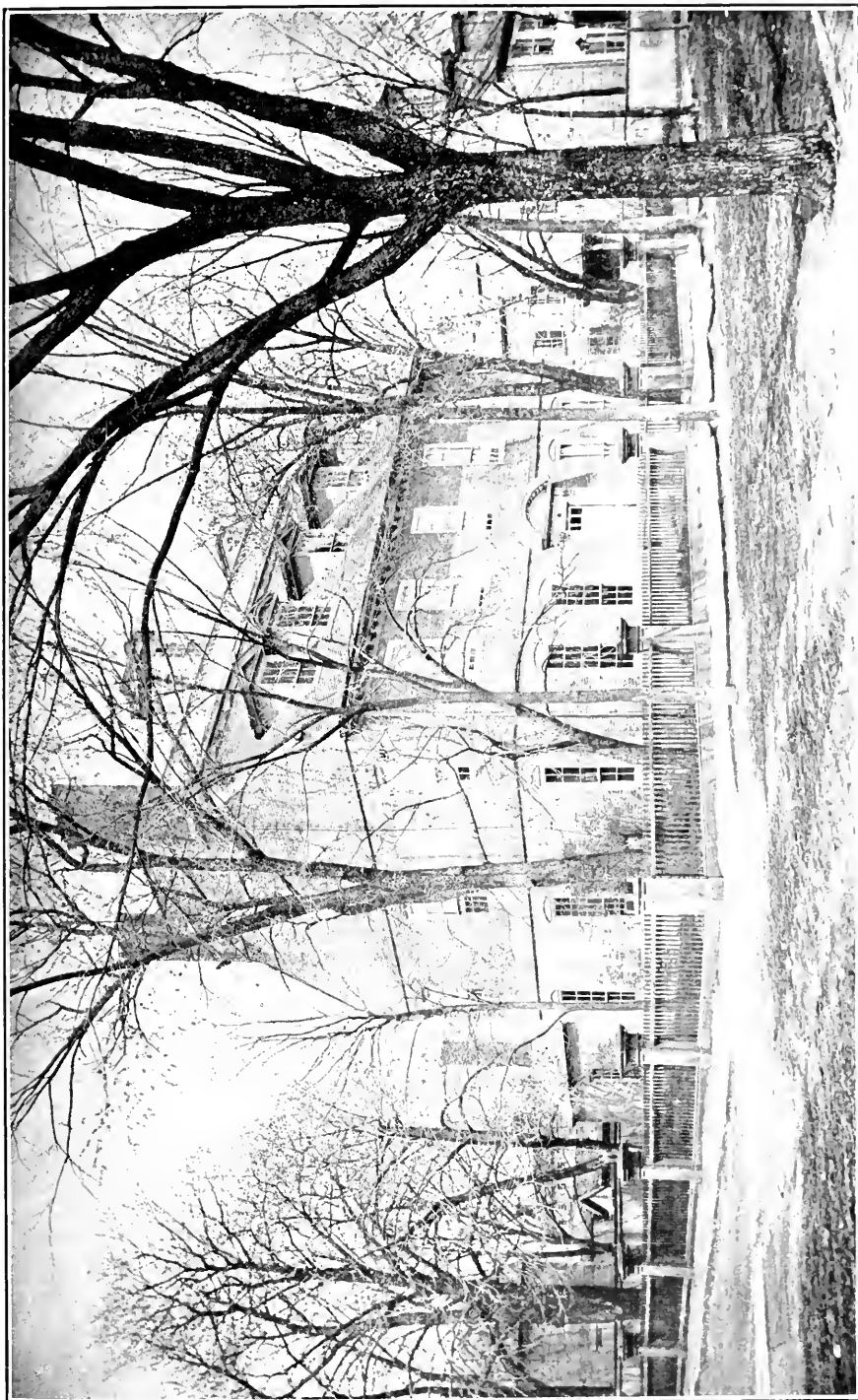
Here is a wonderful old house intensely affecting to stand and contemplate. It seems to be sinking into the earth, as many old houses in England have the appearance of doing, and possesses a tone like a Stradivarius violin, which cannot be counterfeited. The day in the summer of 1896, when I spent a delightful hour in its company, was a sort of reception day, I remember. There were many summer visitors calling, and they “de-ared” it and gushed over it as society people gush over a Chopin étude, because they think it proper to do so, without appreciating the subtle sentiment of the thing at all. It is not so much an affair of one’s education as it is an affair of the heart. People must have the right kind of a heart and the right kind of a charitable nature before they may really enjoy either a Chopin étude or the McPhædris house at Portsmouth. To quote the lines of *Holofernes* in “*Love’s Labor’s Lost*”: They

“Find not the apostrophes, and so miss the accent.”

American Renaissance

While Portsmouth is on the main line of travel north from Boston, it is still almost as much neglected as Annapolis, and it is a great pity that many of its once splendid mansions are falling into decay. The Governor Langdon house, the Ladd house and others should receive the attention they bestow upon such priceless relics in Salem, where everything of the kind is jealously guarded. But Salem is so distinctly illustrative of early nineteenth century work that I intend to refer to it later, under that head, likewise to Providence and Bristol, in Rhode Island, and Middletown, in Connecticut.

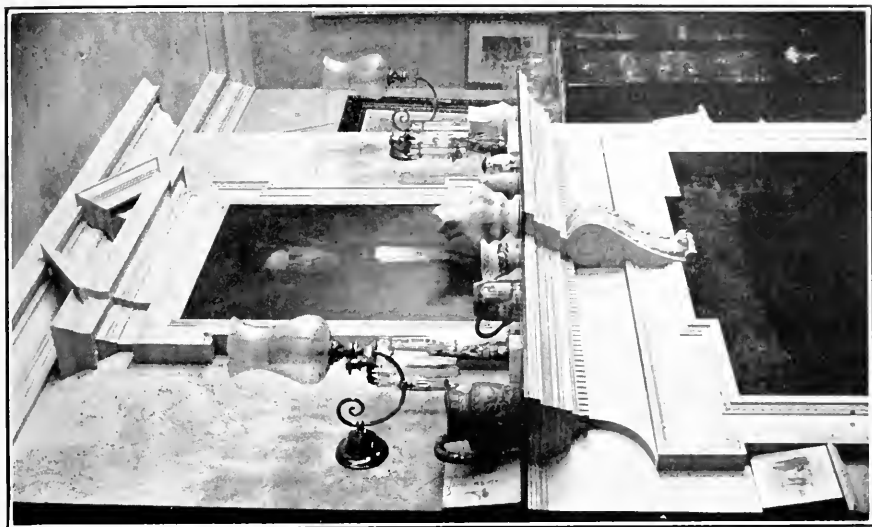
New York and Boston have practically nothing left of the grand epoch. The Walton house of Pearl Street and the Hancock house of Beacon Street, respectively, with all their less noted colleagues, have passed into history, the Walton house (i.e., in its original splendor) before the advent of photography; so that we have not even pictures of it of any value. The Jumel mansion (A. D. 1758) perched upon a dizzy height overlooking the Harlem, is a sole survivor intact whose permanency is threatened at the time I write.



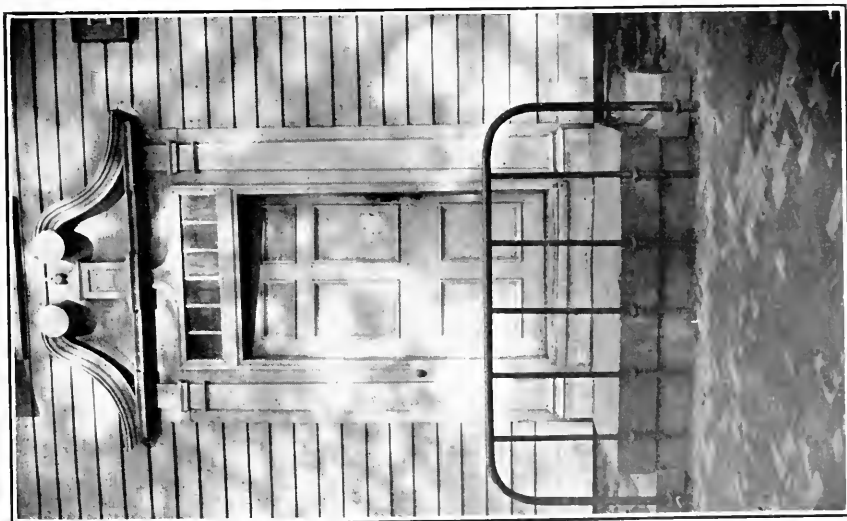
HOUSE OF CAPTAIN MCPHAEDRIS, AT PORTSMOUTH N. H.

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CHIMNEY-PIECE.
AMERICAN RENAISSANCE. 1899



DOORWAY AT WARREN, R. I.

To Mr. J. M. L.
Associated

The Grand Epoch

But Philadelphia, with Fairmount Park and Germantown contiguous, is still, historically, very interesting, the most celebrated relics of this vicinity being the Chew house at Germantown, and the Arnold-Shippen house (called "The Dairy") in Fairmount Park. Presentments of the famous Chew house (still standing) will be found, however, in every illustrated history of the Revolution, including the popular juvenile, "Boys of '76"; but pictures of Wyck, at Germantown (see Plate XXXIII) equally historic, are rare, as are also the pictures of some other places I shall mention, and which I have taken much pains to obtain for this review.

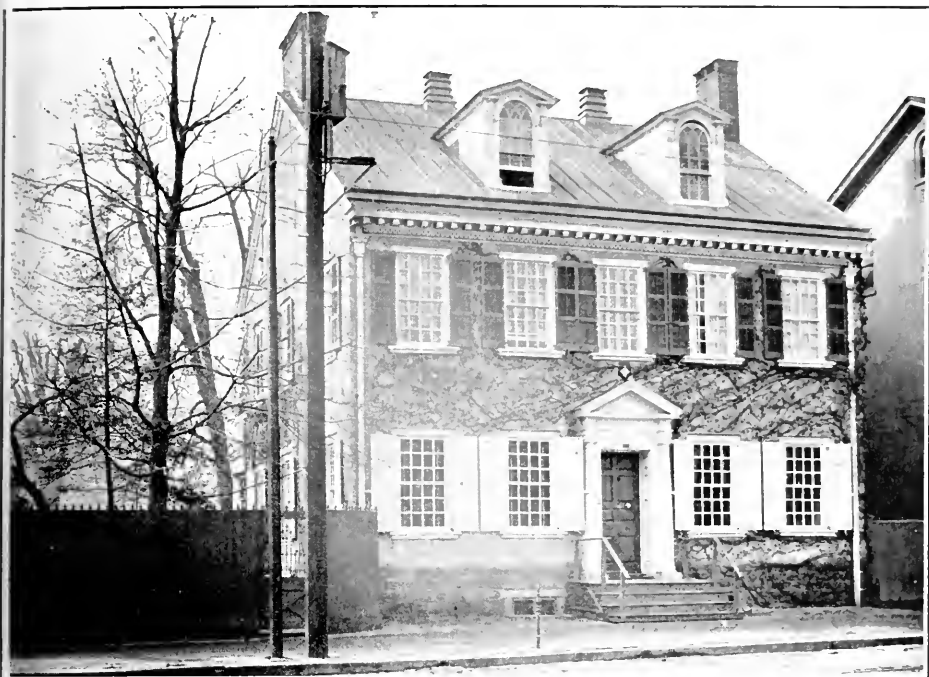
Wyck is the oldest house in Germantown, at least, part of it is said to be, and its extreme length, together with the great passage there is through it to an inner court or garden, make it the most curious as well. Stenton-in-the-Fields has many legends and things to commend it to the antiquarian, but it is not pretty at all, and does not appeal to the architect, who is much more attracted to the Wister house, numbered 5261 Main Street, and to the Morris house (both appearing

American Renaissance

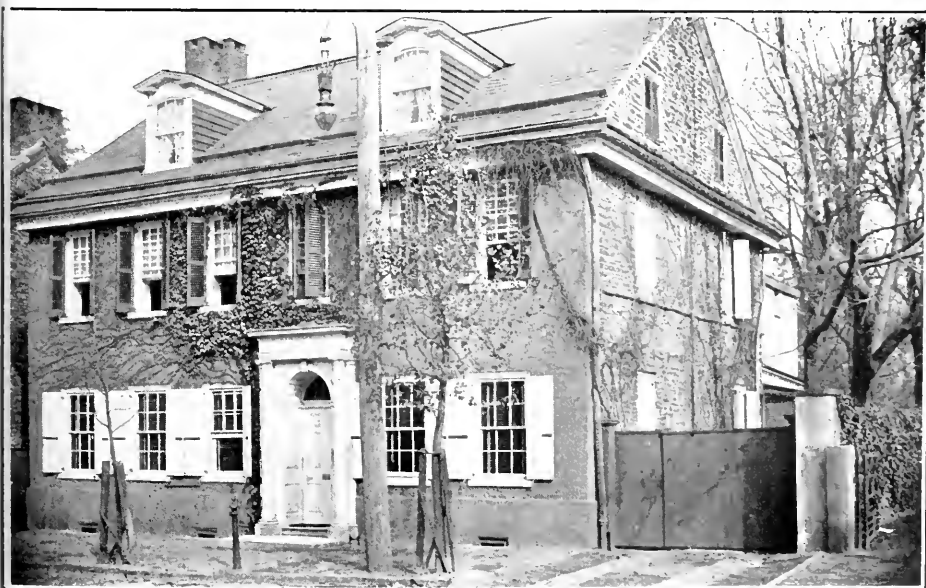
on Plate XXXII), standing a little farther along upon the old turnpike, both of which, like the Strauss waltz I mentioned in a preceding chapter, are *awfully nice*. Germantown itself is much overrated and disappointing. It is not a picturesque town like Annapolis or Portsmouth or Salem, and lacks character generally.

Journeying into Philadelphia we shall find hidden away in the midst of a cheap, *bourgeois* neighborhood in South Eighth Street another Morris house (Plate XXXVI) belonging to the grand epoch. This stunning relic is rarely photographed, and then the professional photographer sets up his camera directly in front of it, uses his wide angle lens, which is sure to distort, and he cannot avoid cutting off part of its base line, and foreshortening the dormer windows. This Morris house has outlived all the friends and acquaintances of its youth. Down by the Delaware River there may linger a vestige, here and there, of the old-time gentry; but most of the architecture which may be called "old," in Philadelphia proper, belongs to a later generation.

Again, let us turn in the direction of Annapolis, not



MORRIS HOUSE, GERMANTOWN



WISTER HOUSE, GERMANTOWN.

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because it is an irresistible magnet that the student of architecture feels, more or less, all his life, but because he cannot afford to miss Alexandria. And I do not mean Alexandria itself, for it is pathetically decrepit. The Carlyle house * is a wreck, and the Fairfax house is ugly. But I mean to say he cannot afford to miss Mount Vernon, which is usually reached via Alexandria. If time is limited in Washington, cut out the new Library of Congress, which is a *political* job, one degree more vulgar than a *commercial* one. Indeed, if worse comes to worse in the matter of time, cut out everything but the Capitol, only, be sure to see Mount Vernon! (Plates XXVII and XXVIII.)

Familiar as everybody is with its pillared portico high above the Potomac, and good as many of the modern photographs are of this effective view of the mansion-house, he who has never visited Mount Vernon can form no idea of the enchanting beauty of that

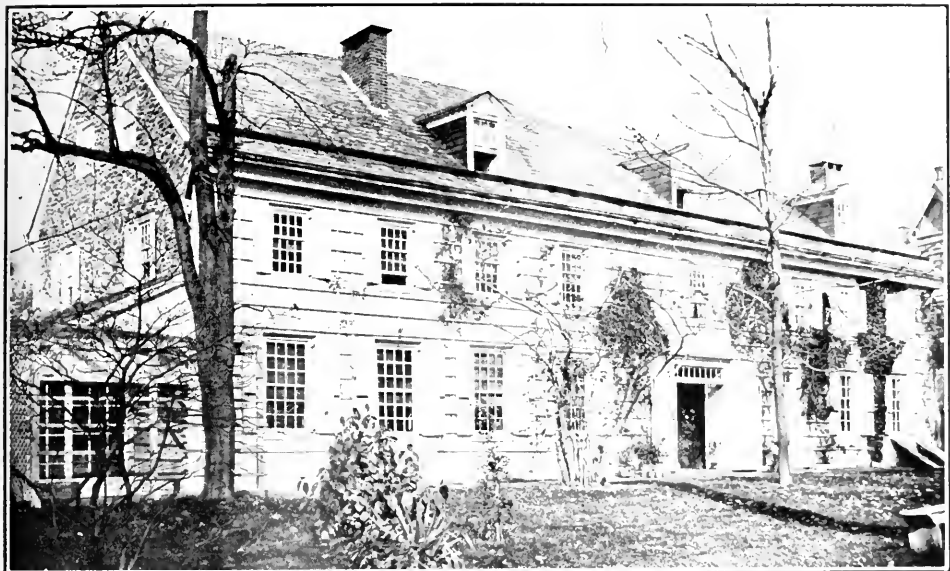
* On Plate XXXIII is presented a modern adaptation of the Carlyle house at Alexandria, which may convey to the reader some faint suggestion of the pleasantness of the original in the hey-day of its prosperity.

American Renaissance

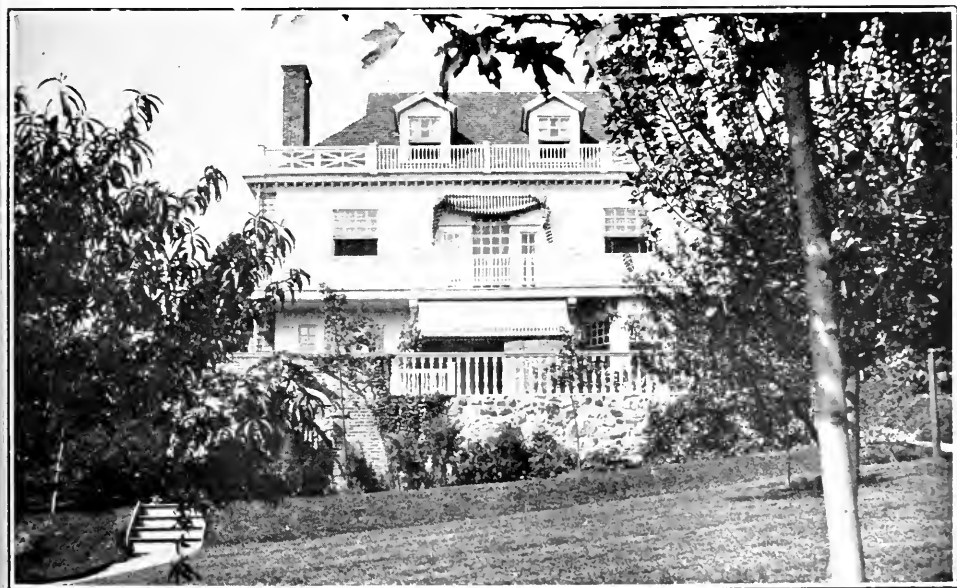
Colonial estate. The ride on the electric road from Alexandria is through a country scrubby enough and rough enough to send dismay to the most persevering tourist; but do not dismay, for at the end a transformation scene awaits you which you will never forget, and if you be an architect, will supply inspiration worth many times your travelling expenses.

Walking out upon the magnificent stretch of greenward that overlooks the river, one cannot but agree with Washington in preferring Mount Vernon to every other country seat of America. I can think of none that equals it naturally, while architecturally, it is thoroughly admirable from stylobate to cupola.

Within, the wainscots, cornices and chimney-pieces are models of excellence; and if, perhaps, we could nowadays achieve better success in ventilating bedrooms than was achieved by Washington with his, we must own, we are still largely the debtor party by the amount of education we imbibe relating to what Eliza Southgate calls—in her edifying book of letters of a girl written eighty years ago, bound between samplers, concerning Sunswick, the Delafield house on Long



WYCK, GERMANTOWN.



TERRACE AND GARDEN FRONT OF A HOUSE AT WYOMING, N. J. 1899.

Modern Development of the Carlyle House, Alexandria, Va.

no. 1000
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The Grand Epoch

Island—"Ease, elegance and hospitality," and which we carry away with us.

As one looks back from the west gate toward the manse which he sees at the end of a vista of verdure, another conception of the first American comes to him which no biographer out of all he has had seems to have thought worth while delineating. Washington has always been our greatest military commander. We were convinced of that long before our visit to Mount Vernon, but he has *not* always been our greatest connoisseur of American Renaissance.

Colonial estates as carefully restored and preserved as Mount Vernon are extremely scarce, especially throughout the South. I number among my acquaintances some enthusiasts who spent several weeks in Gloucester County, Virginia, a year or so ago, and who did me the honor of writing glowing accounts of some ancestral halls they had discovered there. They were not architects, and could hardly have judged of the architectonic merit of their find: but as the names of the plantations were euphonious—names like "Elmington," "Whitemarsh," "Todsbury," and "Rose-

American Renaissance

well," I was anxious to see the pictures they brought home, one of which, with their permission, appears on Plate XXXVII. Visions of more estates like Jefferson's Monticello, Madison's Montpelier, Sabine Hall, Westover and Shirley easily flitted across my brain; but alas! I was doomed to disappointment! The photographs revealed many typical Virginia plantations entailed and beautiful, but not at all remarkable architecturally. In my anxiety to know the truth about Virginia I repeated the question, "Were there no houses as nice as Shirley?—nothing as nice as Shirley?" (see Plate V), when, after considerable explanation and some excuses, there was left but frankly to own that the great plantations I had enumerated were the homes of the wealthier planters and proprietors under the royal patents, and as a matter of fact, there was nothing in Gloucester as representative of the grand epoch as was Shirley-on-the-James.

Throughout New England and the middle States isolated examples of exceptionally good Colonial architecture are still numerous, and some of them in good repair. There will be just one, perhaps, to a town



JOHN COTTON SMITH HOUSE, SHARON, CONN.



THE DEMMING HOUSE, LITCHFIELD, CONN.

(The front has not been altered.)

2000
2000



FORD MANSION, MORRISTOWN, N. J. 18TH CENTURY.

Headquarters of His Excellency General Washington during the Winter of 1779-80.



DOORWAY WITH HOOD, LYNN-REGIS. 1897.

The Grand Epoch

which played its part in the American Revolution, and where any one might suppose there would be more that had survived the menaces of commercialism. This is the case at Morristown, New Jersey, where the Ford mansion (see Plate XXXV) is a lone patriarch whose simple lines make a neighboring and hideous Franco-American roof constructed during our Reign of Terror—the seventies—all the more ugly and exasperating. Then there are some towns like Litchfield, Connecticut, whose claims for Colonial architecture are hardly warranted. There are but two good exemplars in Litchfield to see, and but two indifferent hotels to stop at. As a friend of mine expresses it: “When I dine at one I always wish I had dined at the other.” The two good examples are, namely, Professor Hopkin’s house (Plate XXIX) and the Denning house (Plate XXXIV), standing nearly opposite on North Street. They have both been altered and enlarged, and are therefore so much injured. The fronts of each are happily intact. Modern amplification often makes me wish I could borrow the efficacious sign that used to hang upon the wall of an old saw mill, across which

American Renaissance

was rudely inscribed the impressive legend: "Don't monkey with the buzz-saw!" Only, for my purposes, I should omit "the buzz-saw," substituting therefor "this house." I sincerely believe a great deal of good could yet be accomplished in that way, or, rather, much evil averted.

A number of celebrated relics properly belonging to this chapter, which is already overstepping the limits assigned to it, I have failed to mention. The foregoing form but a very imperfect list of living representatives of the grand epoch. Still, taken each as a type, they fairly cover the historic period cited. My selections present houses variously constructed of stone, of wood, of brick, and of stucco. They are all original designs, original as the times and the conditions which prevailed in the colonies suggested or permitted—original as the literary styles of authors are dissimilar and original, for every art has its grammar, its glossary, and whatever transcends is not art, but *aberration*. It ought to be entirely unnecessary for me to say this; but I have lately been confronted with a startling misapprehension upon this point even among architects.



MORRIS HOUSE, PHILADELPHIA.



WINTER VIEW OF EASTOVER.



A GHOST OF THE GRAND EPOCH, ROSEWELL,
GLOUCESTER COUNTY, VA.

THE
JOURNAL OF
THE
ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

The Grand Epoch

Of course, these Colonial houses are Renaissance, because Renaissance, since Mediæval times, has been the connecting link history has found convenient to unite the present with the past. Yet there is not a building in either England or France or Italy like any of them. They are intensely American in every line, and express as much American history as George Bancroft was able to express in his great literary work. Architecture is not architecture which does not express history. St. Paul's Cathedral in London is strictly Renaissance, yet who shall say it is not *original*, that it is not *English* Renaissance, and architecture above everything?

The Renaissance of America has as much if not more local color than that of Great Britain. And I do not believe there is an architectural scholar in the country who would have the hardihood to declare the vast treasure house of English Renaissance to be a weak imitation of an older school.

No, I cannot clearly make out what the promoters of the newly invented modes of building expect to teach us. There are two lines of poetry wholly irrelevant to architecture, but so irresistibly significant of

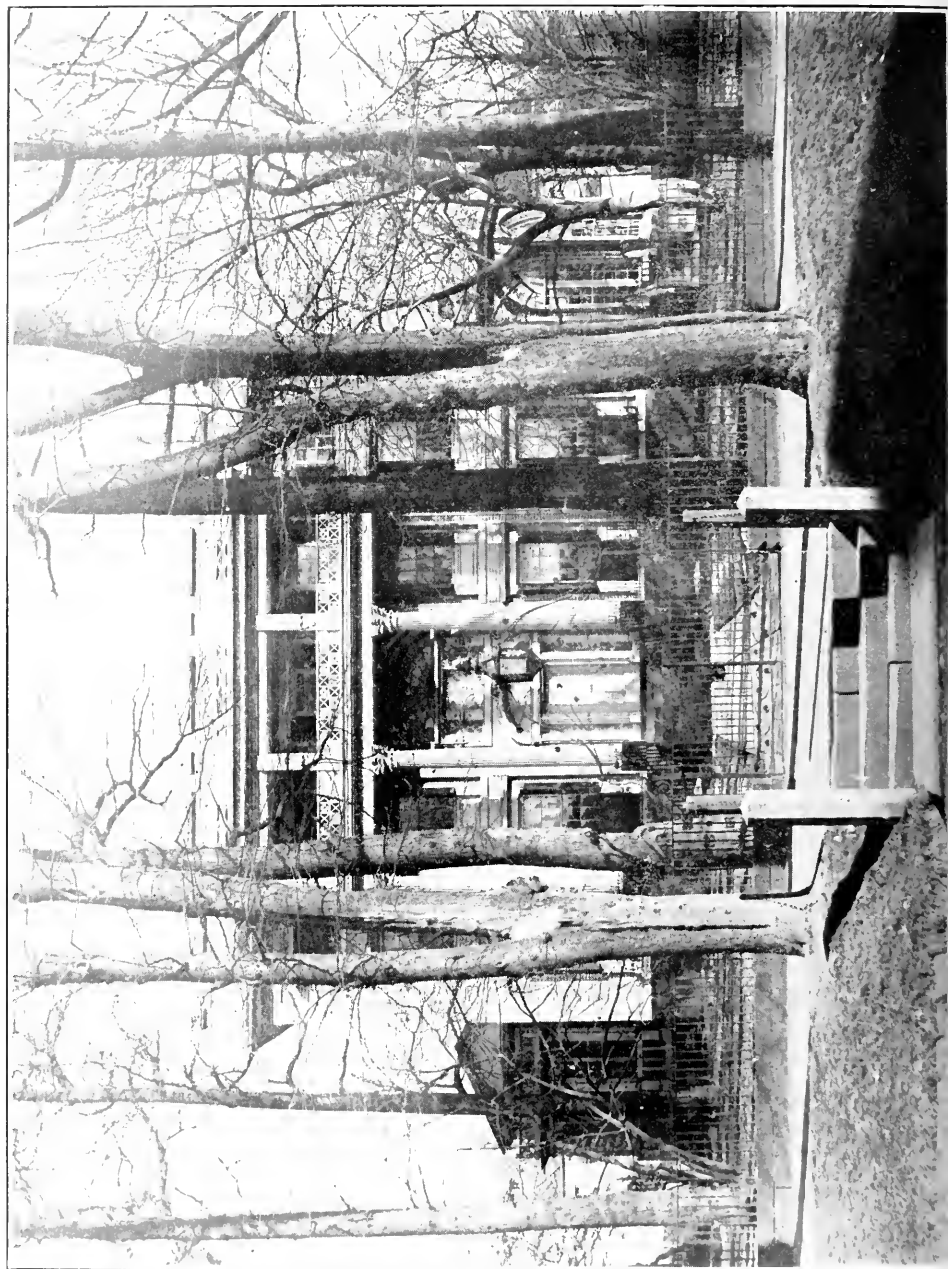
American Renaissance

the propositions of “New Art” in all its guises, that I may not do better than append them here, to wit:

“He might be taught by love * and her together—
I really don’t know what, nor Julia either.”

Don Juan, Canto I, LXXXI.

* It was some new kind of love Julia hoped to invent.



CHAPTER VI

EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY WORK

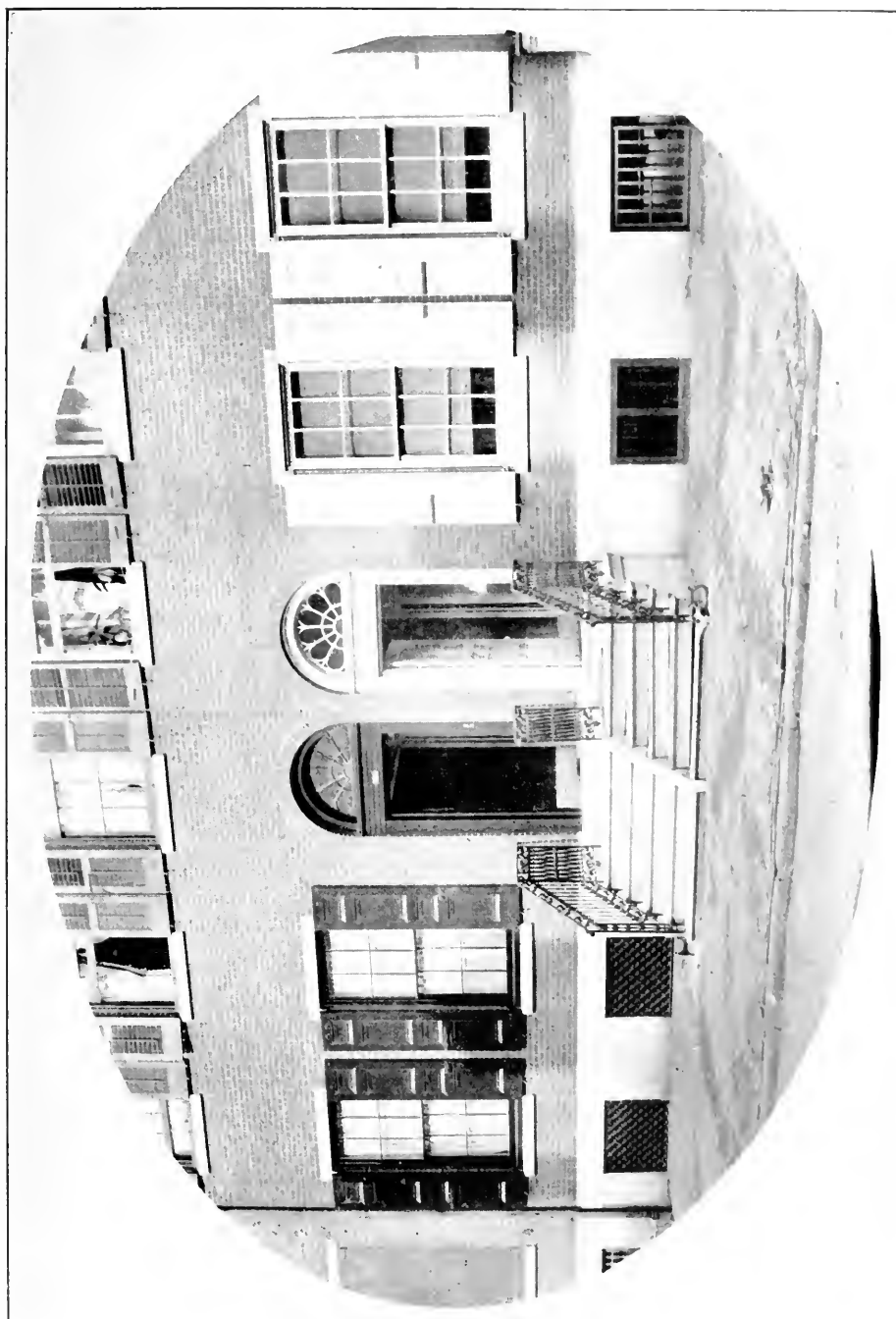
To the brief but brilliant interregnum lasting from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the year 1825 we are indebted for some excellent domestic architecture. The end of the ancient régime in America, at least up to the war with Great Britain in 1812, was marked by a healthy and material progress which seems to have encouraged domestic architecture before everything. It presents no phases in common with that ancient régime in France from which we borrow the title. With us it was not a case of Du Barry and revolution; for the last remnant of America's aristocracy passed away amid the pleasantest of surroundings, the only regret being that our gentry failed to bequeath to their children those rare qualities of eminent nobility which they themselves enjoyed to such perfection, and which are so charmingly indicated by the houses they

American Renaissance

erected—the houses they could not make out to take with them, to which it is still our privilege to pay visits and respects.

Looking backward, let us pay an imaginary visit to Bristol, R. I., in 1810—Bristol at the height of its Renaissance. Perhaps your engagement is an invitation to supper or high tea at George De Wolf's, on Hope Street. (See Plate XXXVIII). They entertain elegantly, and this evening the entire grounds comprised within the close are illuminated by lanterns. One lingers in an enchanted garden, intensely absorbed conversing with the architect of it all—Russell Warren: the scene delightfully recalling a visit to Versailles, and the work of Louis XIV's famous gardener architect, Le Nôtre. It is thus you nearly fail to heed the interruption caused by the servant who approaches along the box-bordered walk to say that supper is served in the large dining-hall. I only wish I had the space to continue this make-believe reminiscence; but the economy of the age in which I live forbids.

I once wrote for the *House Beautiful*, also for the *Architectural Review*, papers wholly devoted to the



LOCAL COLOR, OLD PHILADELPHIA.

Early Nineteenth Century Work

Renaissance architecture of Bristol, and anyone who should be particularly interested in this local development of his national school I would respectfully refer to the indexes of those publications. There are no Colonial houses exactly like those of Bristol. It has a unique development of its own. If the De Wolf-Colt mansion-house is the most elaborate of its contemporaries it is not the more remarkable. The house once belonging to Captain Churchill, sometime master of our queen of privateers, the "Yankee," erected in 1807, is a most fascinating exemplar of its genus (Plate XL). Nearly all the Bristol houses have parapet rails, the detail of which is exquisite. The rails of the Churchill house are particularly fine, while gracefully poised upon a ball at each corner is a carved American eagle, perhaps intended to be emblematic of the victories gained over the British by their intrepid master. Another uncommon development greets us in the Norris house (Plate XL). It has two parapet rails, to accomplish which distinction the third story is narrowed up, I should judge about two feet all around the building. The De Wolf-Middleton house, situ-

American Renaissance

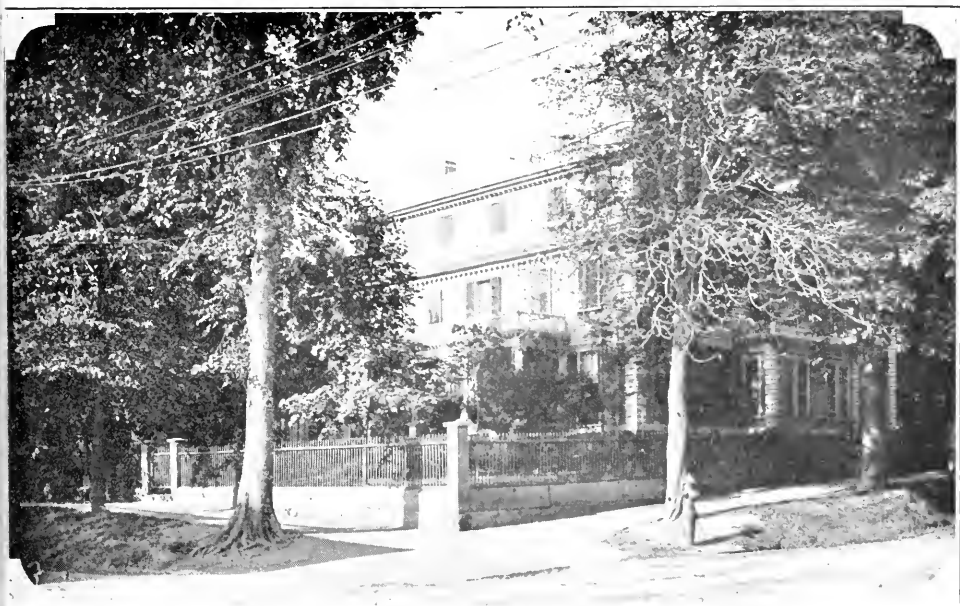
ated on a peninsula forming Bristol harbor, called "Papasquæ," erected in 1808, is still another splendid home with flanking wings and intermediate passages, in which respect savoring of adorable Annapolis. (Plate XLII). The view shown is really the rear-view though it be the carriage approach.

Then follow so many beautiful things in Bristol to describe that I quite despair of making selections. There are doorways—bewitching doorways galore, one or two I have already used to illustrate American Renaissance, and I hope to find room for others without prejudice to other towns.

Under the title "A Salem Enchantment," in the *House Beautiful* for November, 1902, may be found somewhat more of an account of an interesting town filled with early nineteenth century work than is possible here. What Annapolis is to the grand epoch Salem is to the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Federal Street, Essex Street, Broad and Chestnut suggest a panorama of edifying domestic architecture. But of all the grateful impressions that stamp themselves indelibly upon the mind, one in particular has



HOUSE WITH THE EAGLES, BRISTOL, R. I.



THE NORRIS HOUSE, BRISTOL, R. I.



CHESTNUT STREET, SALEM.

Early Nineteenth Century Work

microscopic definition. It is the house on Essex Street once belonging to Captain Joseph White, a retired sea captain. (Plate XLIII). A sensational interest may attach because the captain was murdered for his money in it some seventy years ago; but outside of this interest the architectural student will find in this building as satisfactory an example of its times as exists anywhere. Then, its splendid state of preservation will also delight the heart of a connoisseur, for I cannot conceive of its being at any time in its history more beautiful than it appears to-day. Photographs of it are extremely rare. The Salem guide-books and local histories in referring to the admirable domestic architecture of Salem—which, by the way, they do not half appreciate—curiously omit even mentioning the Captain White house. One may learn all he wishes concerning the Witches and Hawthorne; but facts about the *parc aux cerfs* in the reign of Louis XV are more easily obtainable than facts concerning this historic dwelling in Salem.

Providence, R. I., is also extremely rich in early nineteenth century material; but Hartford and New

American Renaissance

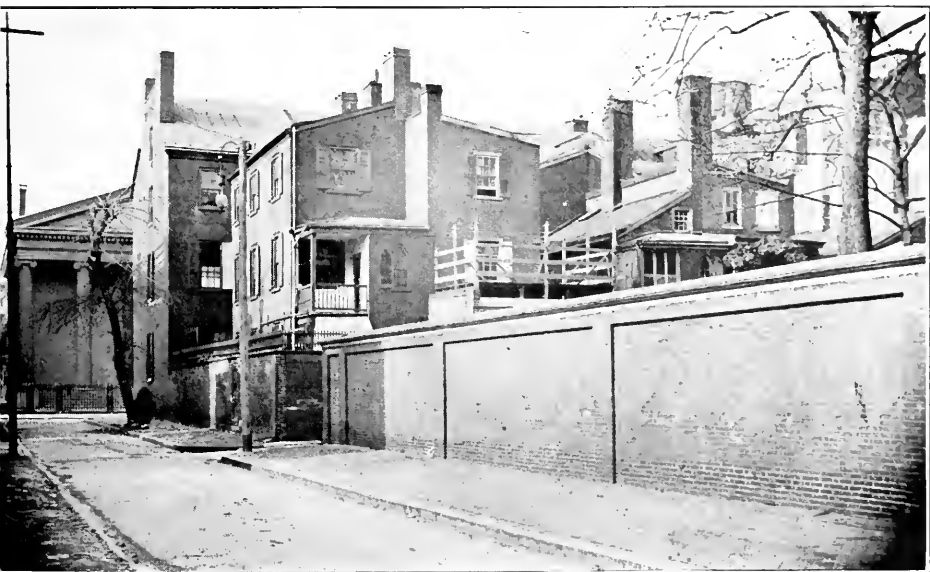
Haven in Connecticut, where any one might wander expecting to find something worth one's while, have been done over and badly done at that. Instead of bothering with these two places, go to Middletown. I have already drawn upon Middletown to illustrate this review, though much remains to which I shall hardly do justice.

The Watkinson house on Main Street, built about 1810 (see Plates XLIV, XLV and LXXXVII), illustrates exceptionally good early nineteenth century work, also its mate, the General Mansfield house, nearly across the way.

The porch of the Watkinson house is beautifully proportioned, exquisite in detail, with a curvilinear ceiling in plaster. The columns rest upon brownstone bases, and these in turn upon a brownstone platform, from the famous Portland quarries located upon the opposite side of the Connecticut river, and which supplied New York City for so many years with its principal building material. The Watkinson house is home-feeling personified; but this is not all. You walk from the iron gateway through another gateway—a



VEST APPROACH AND ENTRANCE DE WOLF-MIDDLETOWN HOUSE, BRISTOL, R. I.
BUILT IN 1808.



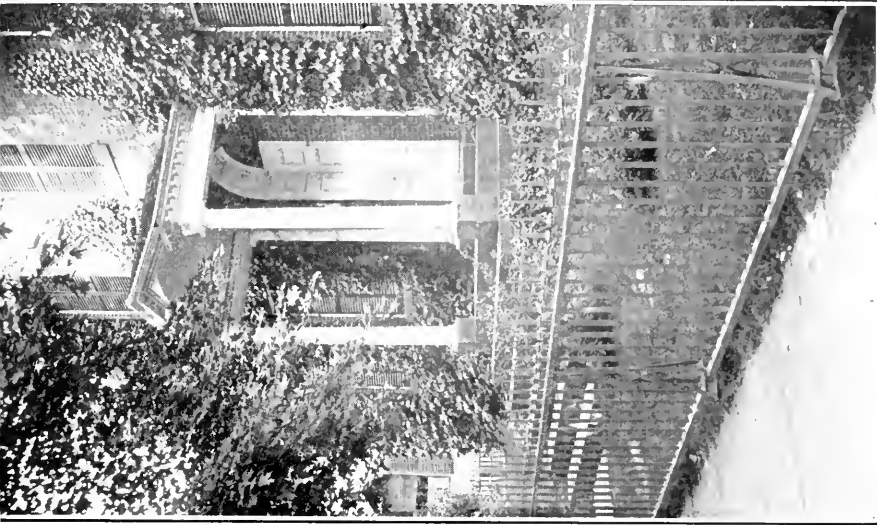
THE BACK BUILDINGS OF PHILADELPHIA.





THE CAPTAIN WHITE HOUSE, ESSEX STREET, SALEM.

30 1988
August 1988



WATKINSON HOUSE, MIDDLETOWN, CONN.

1840.



DOORWAY, SILVERGATE

Jos. Wheeler Dow, Architect.

Early Nineteenth Century Work

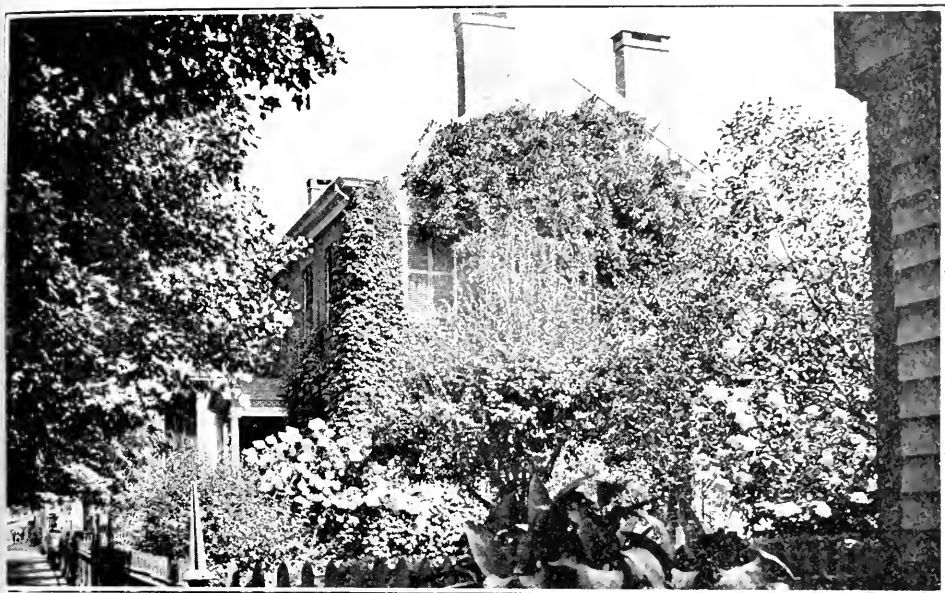
wooden one not visible in the picture, and then again through still another gate, when, all at once, the vision of an old-time Renaissance garden extending far down toward the river surprises and delights the eye. The garden is furnished with all the traditional paraphernalia appropriate to it; and under curious arbors, by trellises into miniature boscages, one wanders enchanted.

I have spoken of the efflorescence of commercialism, and I tried to find for a foregoing chapter an illustration of heaping meretricious ornament upon itself which I needed at that time; but now I have the pleasure to show you the true efflorescence in connection with architecture, the efflorescence with which the Greatest of all architects has most to do in bringing to perfection.

I do not think I may conclude an article upon early nineteenth century architecture in America without a paragraph in reference to that which exists, and is likely to remain for some time, in the traditionally blue-blooded section of Philadelphia bounded by Chestnut and Pine Streets east of the Schuylkill river. (See Plates XX, XXXIX and LXXXVII.) And all things

American Renaissance

considered I do not know that we have improved very much, if any, upon those old Philadelphia city house plans in any of the newer designs exploited in such variety both in New York and elsewhere. Without the private street at the rear of the lot we cannot hope to do anything very satisfactory, and in those private streets—the entrance for the tradespeople to the houses—Philadelphia has a tremendous advantage at the outset. This amplification of the backyard—the dignity afforded it by an independent gateway upon a street of its own, the pair of doors with a transom opening into it from the staircase hall recessed by the rounded corner of the back building, and the disposition of the back building itself, all present dazzling opportunities to the architect not only for effects but for comfort and convenience. The mezzanine dining-room with windows upon two sides has unlimited possibilities which they seem never to have fully grasped or appreciated in Philadelphia. I only wish I had the restoration of one of those old Philadelphia houses with *carte blanche* to do with it as I liked. Confining the entire mechanism of the ménage to the back-building, the heat of



WATKINSON HOUSE, MIDDLETOWN, CONN. EPOCH 1810



BENEFIT STREET, PROVIDENCE.

Early Nineteenth Century Work

the kitchen, the odors of the culinary operations, and the plumbing is a splendid economic scheme. I should think that the system of plumbing of the old houses would need to be renewed by this time, which I have no doubt is being attended to, as I believe, according to the latest social canons, one may not better establish himself in Philadelphia than by reclaiming one of these ancient domiciles in what has, perhaps, become a somewhat problematical neighborhood.

Certainly, it must be lots of fun to rehabilitate the paneled shutters, to tie them with ribbons run through the rings, to restore the marble steps to immaculate whiteness once more, to make the smiling fan-top doors smart again with new paint, to brighten the windows with curtains that may be often re-laundered, and lastly, to go to Wanamaker's for a new busybody.*

Then comes the happy day when we may set up

* A kind of looking-glass peculiar to Philadelphia and usually attached to a second-story window, whereby the occupants of a house may "keep tab" of not only whatever is occurring up and down street, but of whoever is bold enough, under the circumstances, to ring the front door bell.

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our household gods in a way infinitely to our liking, and reëstablish in business that ever willing, all round faithful servant—the back-building, which Philadelphians assure us has cured the case of many a *malade imaginaire*, with almost human instinct, by unexpectedly taking fire. (See Plate XLII.)



MODERN CHIMNEY-PIECE.

Joy WHIFLER DOW, Architect.

CHAPTER VII

THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

THE trick enigmatical nature sometimes plays the gentlest parents by an offspring who, notwithstanding their constant solicitude—the constant bending of the twig—turns out to be a disappointment, not to say a positively black sheep, has its analogy in art. And of such curious analogy no more picturesque example exists than that supplied by what has come to be known as our “Transitional period”—a hopelessly ordinary offspring of a civilization highly cultivated and refined.

To see the Transitional period in its popular aspect, which is its worst aspect, no better spectacles may be borrowed than those once worn by Charles Dickens, the novelist, to write his “American Notes” and “Martin Chuzzlewit.” Only, it will not do to pass final judgment from a scathing arraignment of crimes to the extent of burlesquing the subject, as happens at

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times in Dickens' books. There is the documentary evidence to be sifted and examined which, I am very sure, will lessen and correct the scandal materially. And if I have hitherto neglected to avail myself of such evidence, permitting the scandal of the Transitional period to appear as common gossip in these articles, it was for dramatic effect and for contrast. In the present article I propose to make reparation, and direct the magnifying power mainly upon that which is good.

It was somewhat unfair of Dickens to expect that we should have achieved architectural grandeur in the brief time at our disposal; but I regret that his complimentary description of the City of Washington in the forties is yet graphic in a degree of the present capital, though vast appropriations by Congress have been frequently lavished upon it, and misspent. We know that Dickens was not always prejudiced, by the encomiums he bestowed upon the scenery of New England, for instance, and the pretty girls he chanced to meet during his visit, who it seems contrived to be born in America despite the banal times and hideous fashions which, I am glad, could not wholly disguise

The Transitional Period

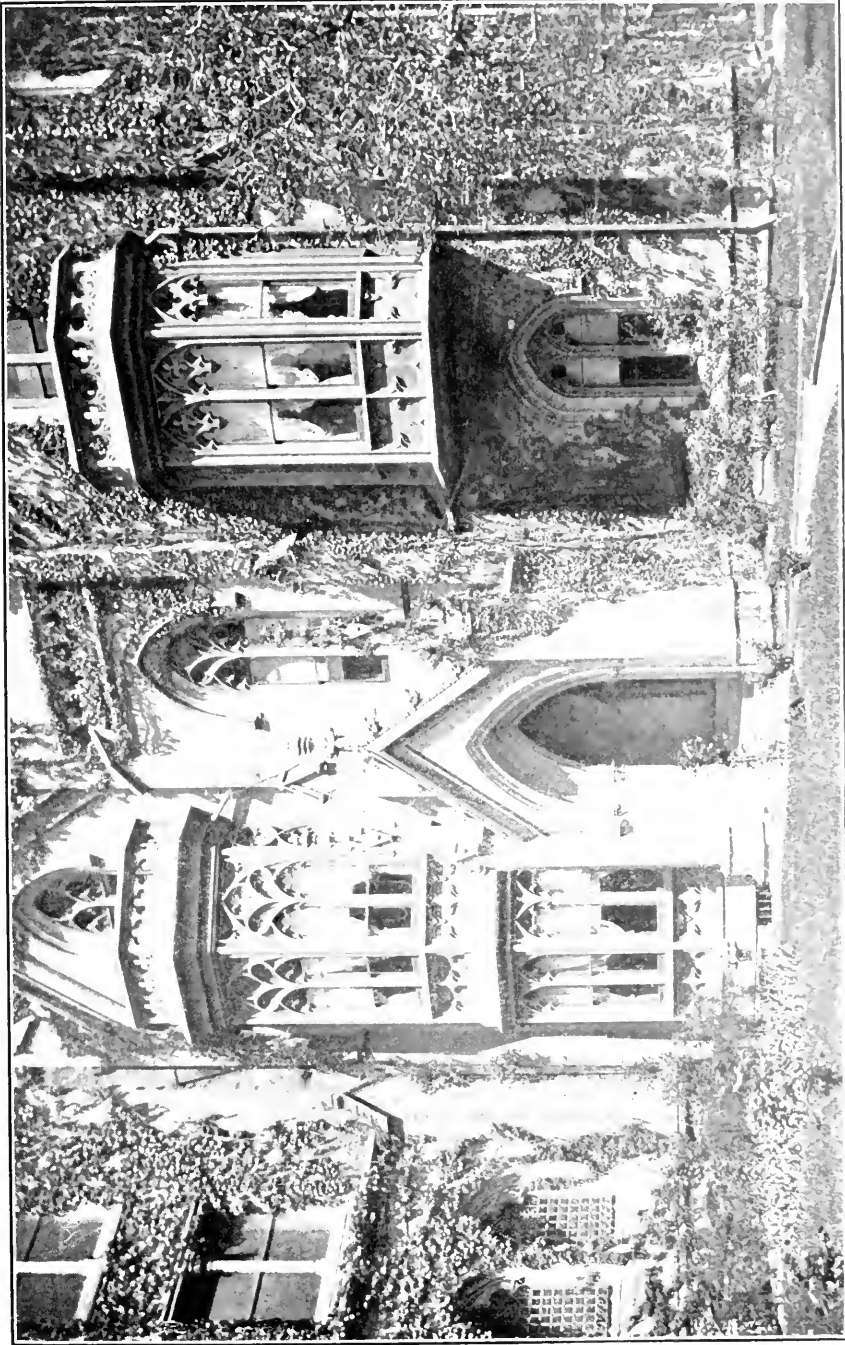
them. However, as complete sets of the works of Charles Dickens are to be found upon the shelves of every public library, and secondhand copies of "American Notes" and "Martin Chuzzlewit" may be picked up for a few pennies at the bookstands, nobody need miss the salutary influence of many of the criticisms. Not so easily may the American student provide himself with a copy of the diary of Philip Hone, though it be a much more instructive and faithful commentary upon the Transitional period than anything Dickens ever wrote. For I think the two volumes sell for \$7 net. There are no pirated copies to be had, of course, no cheap editions, as is usually the case with the more reliable sources of information it is obligatory upon us to look up would we follow cause and effect in the history of American art. Here indeed our own copyright law is a positive hindrance to the acquisition of knowledge. Few architectural students can afford \$7 for a purely literary work devoted to the Transitional period.

Mr. Hone wrote his journal from day to day as Samuel Pepys wrote his, without idea of publication, and, consequently, without exaggeration, praise or ridi-

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culc for effect. He wrote things down as he saw them. He was not writing to correct popular abuses. He was, apparently, governed in his avocation by no other desire than the simple one of keeping a diary. And it is this unaffected form of diary that makes its contents more and more valuable as time goes on.

When Dickens has "Martin Chuzzlewit" entertained in New York society he constructs for our edification an amusing farce which we enjoy as a farce, though the author himself pretends to be in very earnest; but when Philip Hone relates of an assembly ball with great difficulty arranged owing to the painful lack of homogeneity and even suitability of the available personnel, another and serious phase of the case is presented, because it is sadly true. Under the ingenuous pen of this diarist, we may see James Gordon Bennett the elder wrangling with the unliveried servants for admission which, we are told, the management finally consented to extend upon the one condition that the account of the ball which was to appear in the *Herald* the following morning should at least be "decent." I believe that is the word Mr. Hone uses.



GRACE CHURCH RECTORY.

The Transitional Period

At any rate, we realize as never before how disorganized the social fabric must have been at the period, and how it had deteriorated from that of the older régimes. It is all but ludicrous, that entry in the diary where the connoisseurs gather in Barclay Street to pay their respects to such mediocre art as was exemplified by the allegorical series of paintings called "The Voyage of Life." The reader remembers the old engravings of them, I dare say, very well. But we know that the connoisseurs did do this very silly thing, because Philip Hone's diary is indisputable and exact evidence uncolored. It is incredible, nevertheless, that a political expediency should have caused the whole nation to forget so readily the proficiency in art matters attained by preceding generations, and, presto! resolved its most representative spirits into an unpromising class of abecedarians.

There is a tone often noticeable throughout the memoirs of Philip Hone, who sometimes made trips abroad in the sailing packets of his day, thereby extending the scope of his own horizon, as though he were a bit ashamed of the crude provincialism of his

American Renaissance

compatriots when it was the custom to speak the English language incorrectly, and when the three Rs—"Reading, Riting and Rithmetic"—were all the academic preparation for a life of usefulness that was required. Indeed, if he were quick at figures, could follow Webster's spelling book, and makē neat flourishes with his pen, no young man of the Transitional period need ever have despaired of positions and promotion.

The question often heard, now-a-days, "What chance has a man for self-cultivation in a boom town?" applies very nearly to the metropolis of the Transitional period.* What use more profitable could one have found for his time than speculation in real estate, if one could buy a house for \$25,000, as did Philip Hone, and sell it within a few years for \$60,000? Certainly, there was little inducement to pursue art in such a phenomenally active market for values. The best that could be expected of the very busy man of the day was to send his son betimes to college and to Europe,

*The panic of 1837 broke the boom for a while, but it was practically rehabilitated by the inauguration of Harrison in 1841.

The Transitional Period

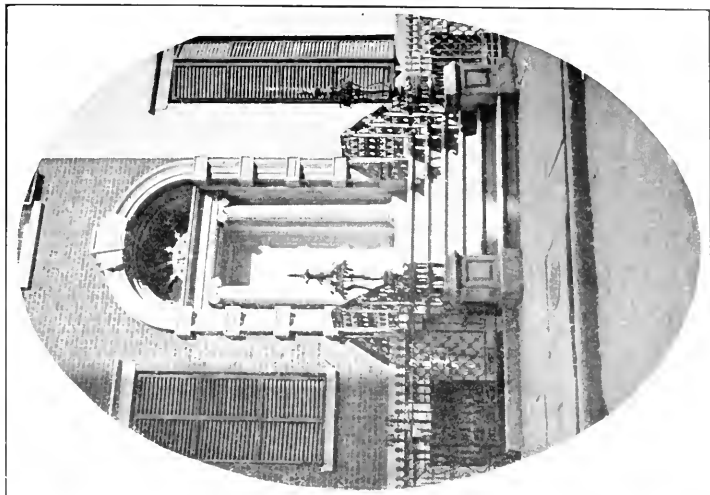
the liberal education, it is true, often unfitting him again for business as it was transacted in America. There was a manufacturer of Transitional furniture who sent his son to Paris to learn cabinet-making of those most renowned of European artificers: and I have it from the son himself that he was, afterwards, obliged to unlearn and forget all his Parisian training in order to meet the home demand for cheap and tawdry stuff. Fancy!

The art prophet which this bourgeois epoch produced corresponded exactly to it—just such a one as might be naturally expected—John Ruskin, old foggy with ideas of no practical value to communicate to the world, but, like Browning and Emerson, full of words, rhymes and sentences. Ruskin conceived a violent passion *à la* Plato for the Gothic mode of building. He affected to deplore the “foul flood of the Renaissance.” And his great theory was that as the leaves of plants nearly always terminate in a point, it was intended by nature that man should take pattern therefrom for his architecture. To make a theory so point-device consistent Ruskin went so far as to criticise those leaves of plants which terminate in other ways. Imagine some

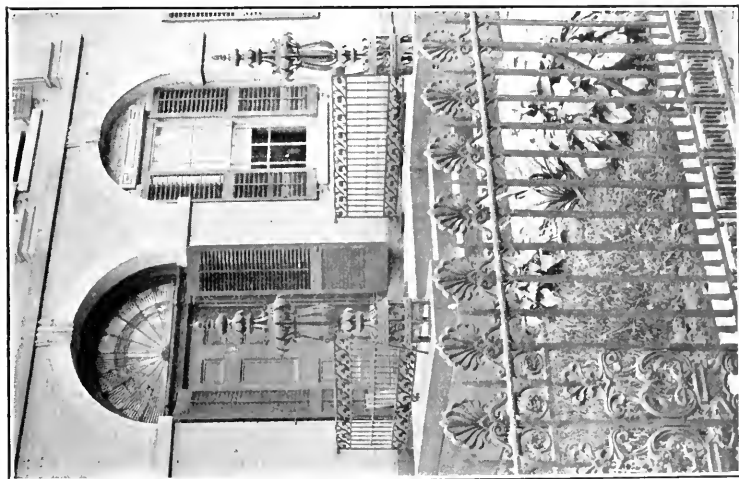
American Renaissance

classic writer tracing the origin of the Roman arch to lily-pads which may have floated in the Tiber!

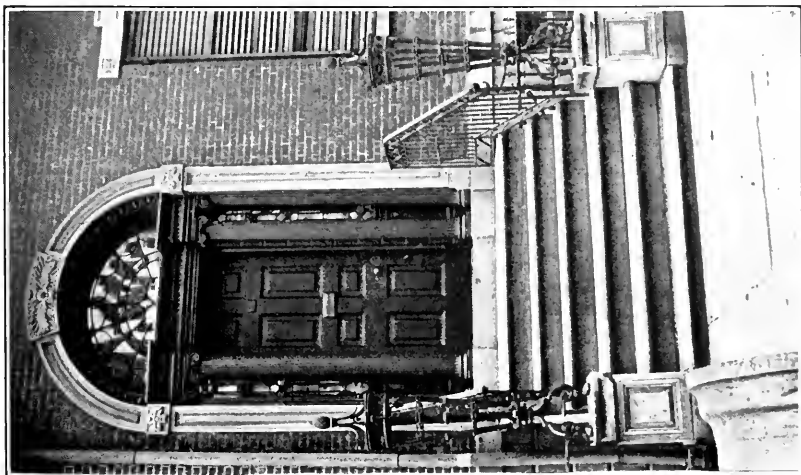
The only really clever observation concerning architecture Ruskin ever made was the metaphor he applied to the great mediæval cathedrals—"frozen music." But he was not a purist of Gothic architecture in the truer sense. Had he been so, he would have defended the Tudor castles of England against Renaissance obtrusion; for the Tudor architecture was a true development of the home idea, legitimate and historical, while that of the Gothic cathedrals was not intended to serve for dwelling-houses by any possible contingency. Yet Ruskin persisted in the feasibility of an anomalous adaptation, something, as a matter of fact, that nobody has achieved with very great credit. For rectories and parish houses the ecclesiastic Gothic may serve as far as sentiment and harmony are desired; but for practical uses it is a failure applied to dwelling-houses. Grace Church rectory is extremely disappointing within if we consider all the desiderata of a modern home, however suggestive of comfort it may be to the casual observer. (See Plate XLVII).



EAST FOURTH ST., NEW YORK.



THE SARGENT HOUSE (COMMON, EAST),
NEW HAVEN.



NO. 23 BOND ST., NEW YORK.

The Transitional Period

The Richmond-Dow house at Warren, R. I., shown in Plate L, is a typical example of Ruskin Gothic when the poet's influence was at its height. For the romantically inclined individual of the Transitional period but one course was open, namely, to build himself a Ruskin Gothic cottage. The stone cottages like the Richmond-Dow cottage were the better sort, and if the narrow lancet windows tended to make them a little gloomy they were otherwise not half bad: but the wooden cottages with the perpendicular battens are execrable. Another very decent stone cottage in ecclesiastic Gothic is shown in Plate LI. It has a charming setting on High Street at Middletown, Ct., and again the interior, like Grace church rectory, is a disappointment. The delightful window overlooking the lawn is not nearly so nice from the inside. The fibre of quartered oak was generally too tough for the planes and chisels of the Transitional joiners, who always preferred to work in white pine, and leave to the make-shift grainer the responsibility of doing it up to simulate oak. We are, all of us, familiar with that forlorn art of graining.

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Then, in order not to forego in the ecclesiastic Gothic cottages another indispensable makeshift—the American veranda—the Transitional architects desecrated rood-screens and chancel carvings. Happily, now-a-days, nobody would think of copying Ruskin in a dwelling-house. People may like to read a conventional gift-book occasionally, and take up “Sesame and Lilies” from the drawing-room table when they have time to kill, and want to get away from everyday life and practical things. Moreover, the most selfish and unscrupulous people in the world are apt to have a vein of sentimental efflorescence in their nature which will reveal itself, when they read Ruskin or Browning, with a zest that is Machiavelian.

But the Transitional period as we have come to know it best was not a Gothic revival, but a poverty-stricken application of Renaissance motive and detail out of the midst of which I have proposed to try to find something commendable—something to praise. Well, I think I shall have done so when I throw upon the imaginary screen I have so often suspended before my very patient audience, the picture of the doorway

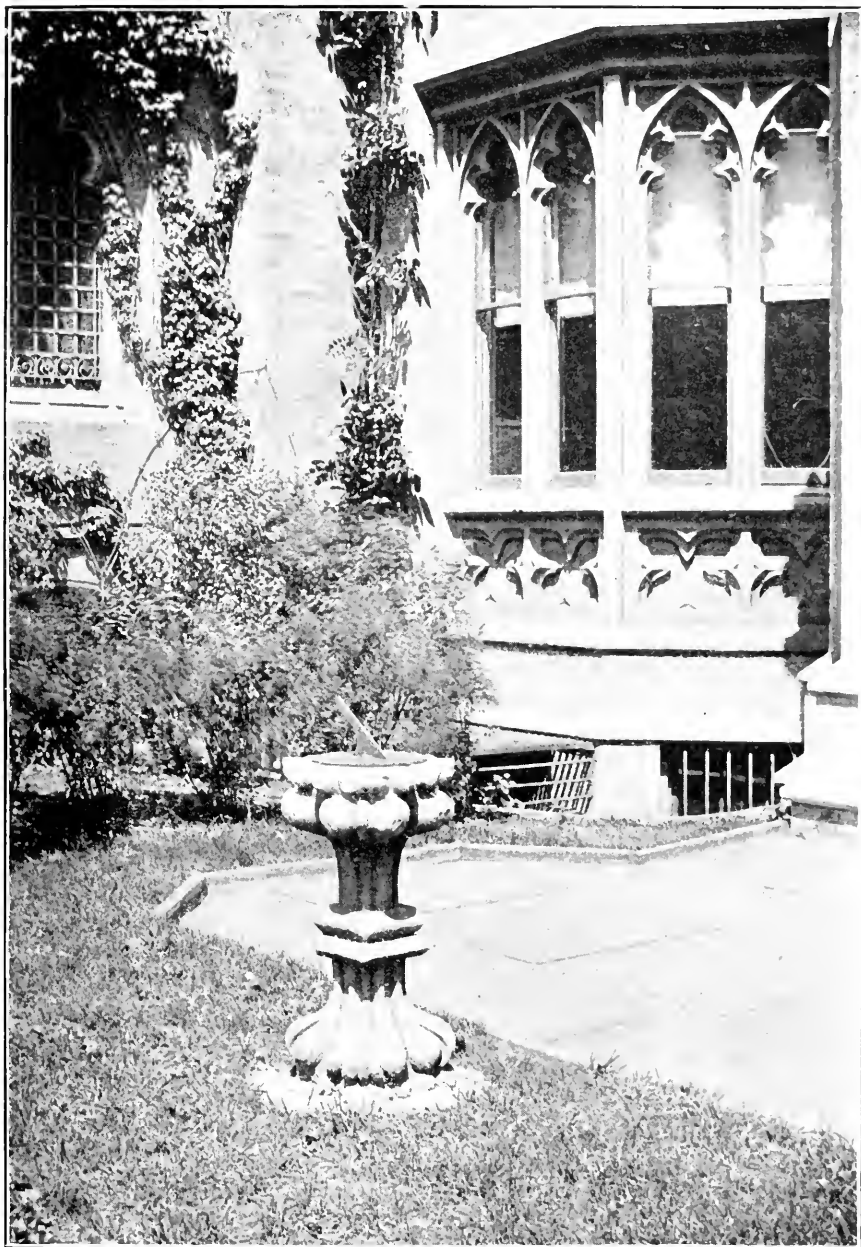
The Transitional Period

in East Fourth Street, New York City (Plate XLVIII). And were it a "truly" phantasmagoria I were conducting, I know it would be difficult for an audience to restrain itself—not to cry "Ah!" after the manner of the gallery, because I know how this picture affects me, and can discount the reader's enthusiasm accordingly. The adjoining windows are out of proportion to the doorway, and badly spaced, but are faithful to the epoch. One must not expect too much of a Transitional house. The part of the window shown belonging to No. 23 Bond Street—(see Plate XLVIII), has better proportions, though the doorway beside it is not half as beautiful as the one on Fourth Street. Still, we owe it to an uncommon episode that this doorway has been photographed at all, and to which my acknowledgment is given, though I do not altogether approve the sentiment of the episode.

No. 23 Bond Street was once the property of a great beau of the Transitional period named Harry Ward. He had money besides. Now, it is very easy and natural for a great beau of any epoch, with money besides to believe that because the Sabbath was made for

American Renaissance

man, the six other days were made for him, also. Alas! no mistake could be more unfortunate, and of this the doorway has long stood as mute evidence. In coming into possession of No. 23 Bond Street, in his time a fashionable neighborhood, Harry Ward decorated and refurnished the house in a way which may be said to have been the last word upon the subject of household art of the period; and, to recur to a Transitional colloquialism, "he had his girl picked out." But there were inimical circumstances which precluded the nuptial celebration, so they could not live in the house. Then Mr. Ward died, and, I believe, bequeathed No. 23 Bond Street, in fee-simple, to his sweetheart. This sweetheart, like Edith Bartlett in "Looking Backward," rode on the top of the coach, and consequently she also coveted the six days that were not made for man, very much. The dispensation seemed unnecessarily cruel. We may not judge of the motives that induced her to rebel, and to keep the house as long as she lived a sacred memorial to Mr. Ward and to have nothing moved or changed from the way he had ordered it during his lifetime; but we know that without



SUN-DIAL, GRACE CHURCH RECTORY, NEW YORK CITY.

The Transitional Period

a superabundance of wealth, she could not have gratified a sentiment wherein a sinister and selfish side outweighs its virtue. You see, how very few of us may be trusted with money! For it would have been a so much finer monument to Mr. Ward had this house been bestowed by his legatee upon some poorer though deserving couple whom the Lord had destined to be of use to Him:—it would have been infinitely better dedicated as a museum of the Transitional period for its didactic benefit to art students; but I fear I am the only human being, excepting the care-takers perhaps, who has derived any tangible satisfaction from No. 23 Bond street since the sad dénouement which closed it so tightly to the busy stream of life constantly passing.*

* Within the last year death has removed the faithful mourner, and the house has been turned into a kind of sweat shop, consequently the photograph on Plate XLVIII cannot be duplicated. The inner doorway of the vestibule has been taken away bodily, no doubt to adorn some modern Colonial house, also the tapering posts of wrought iron, and the starting newel of the staircase. Mockery of an intense drama!

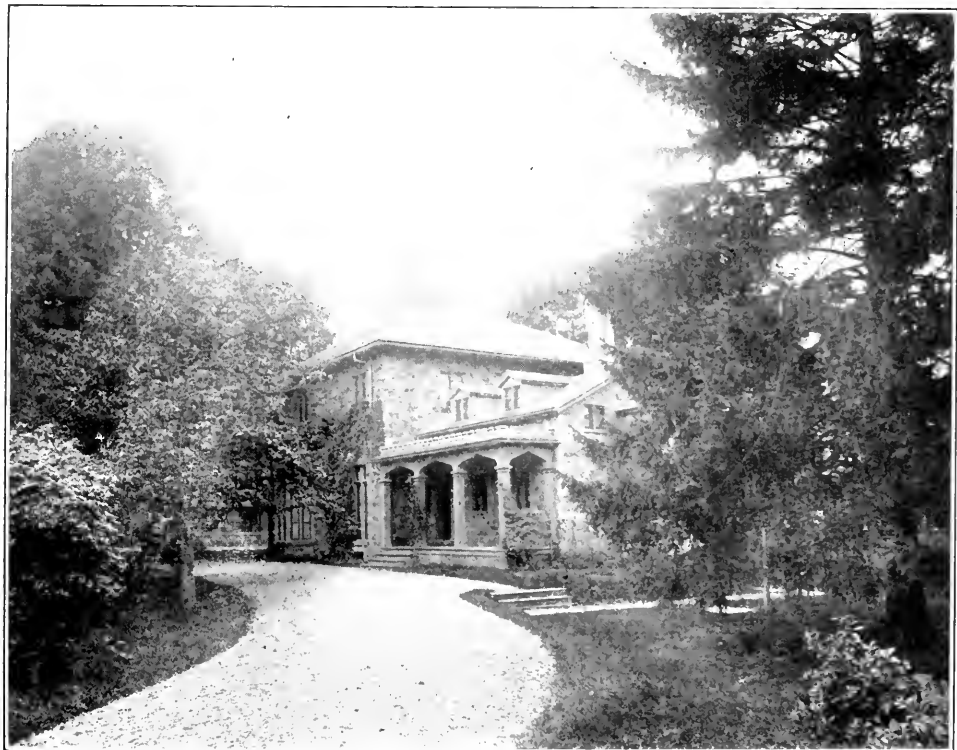
American Renaissance

I suppose the finest specimen of Transitional domestic architecture extant in the United States is the Bennett house on County Street in New Bedford (see Plate LI, also Frontispiece), erected about 1840, for a full description of which I would respectfully refer the reader to the *Architectural Review* (Boston) for July, 1901. There is nothing disappointing about this Transitional exemplar: it was one of those grateful notes of hope at a season of national melancholia. Wonderfully imposing from its great size, it will grieve the reader to learn that the magnificent pile is already crumbling from lack of appreciation, and it will not be long before the dealer in second-hand building materials carries it away, piece by piece, to his yard, so little do the people of New Bedford care for the most interesting building by far that their city possesses to-day. The Bennett house is the only successful adaptation of the Greek-temple motive, *pur et simple*, to domestic purposes that has come to my knowledge.

And here I want to say a single word about restoration. If by any chance you live in a house of the Transitional period that illustrates as good architecture



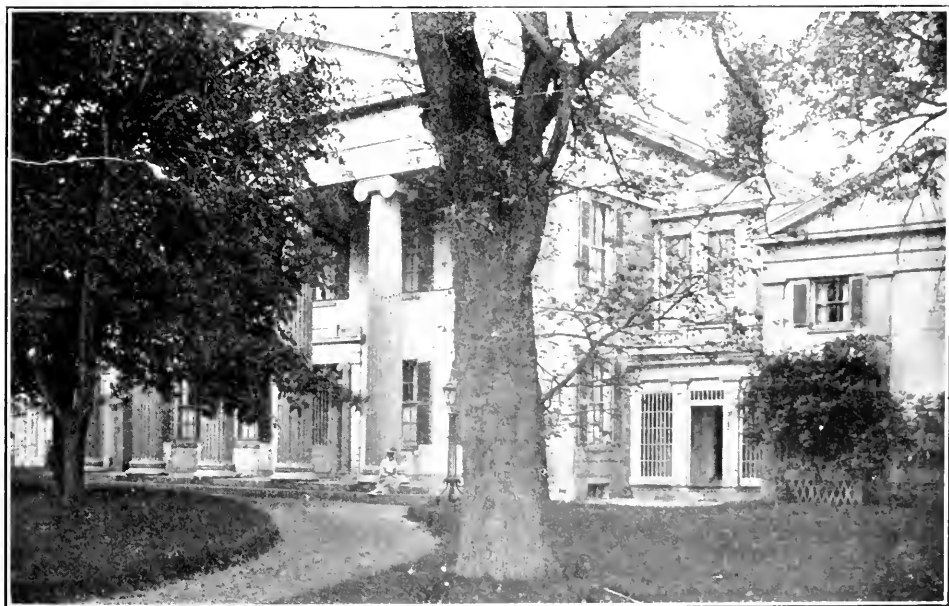
HOUSE OF MRS. RICHMOND-DOW, WARREN, R. I.



HOUSE OF MRS. RICHMOND-DOW, WARREN, R. I.
View from the Close.



HOUSE ON HIGH STREET, MIDDLETOWN, CONN.



THE BENNETT HOUSE, COUNTY ST., NEW BEDFORD, MASS.

The Transitional Period

as that of the de Zeng house on High Street in Middletown (see Plate LIII), don't try to make it Colonial as I have seen a tendency among ill-advised people to do of late. Let me say to you that you have something already so much ahead of average modern Colonial—"as she is spoke"—that it would be a sin against the decalogue of art to alter or, indeed, do other with it than religiously to guard. Just keep your Transitional exemplar in the same admirable state of repair in which you see the de Zeng house at Middletown—and enjoy it. You will thereby have fulfilled your duty to art and to the future generations who will rise up and call you blessed.

The foregoing paragraph applies equally to the Roberts mansion at the northeast corner of Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia (Plate LIII). For the sake of goodness, don't try to colonialize it! There are several houses in Philadelphia that resemble the Roberts house—the Dundas-Lippincott house and the Willstack house being two of them, but I think neither so admirable.

I do not know that I should ever build myself a

American Renaissance

house to live in after the manner of the Transitional period even after such delightful and exceptional models as are supplied by the Bennett, Roberts or de Zeng houses, but if I already possessed one, I should rest content that its architecture could not be improved by any material alteration I could suggest.

In the *Architectural Review* for February, 1902, the reader may read about the Transitional houses of lower Fifth Avenue, New York City, also of that celebrated row facing Washington Square. The Waterbury house (see Plate LIV) was demolished last winter, so that its entrancing attic windows screened by the crosses of St. Andrew will no longer delight the visitor who returns to the old neighborhood.

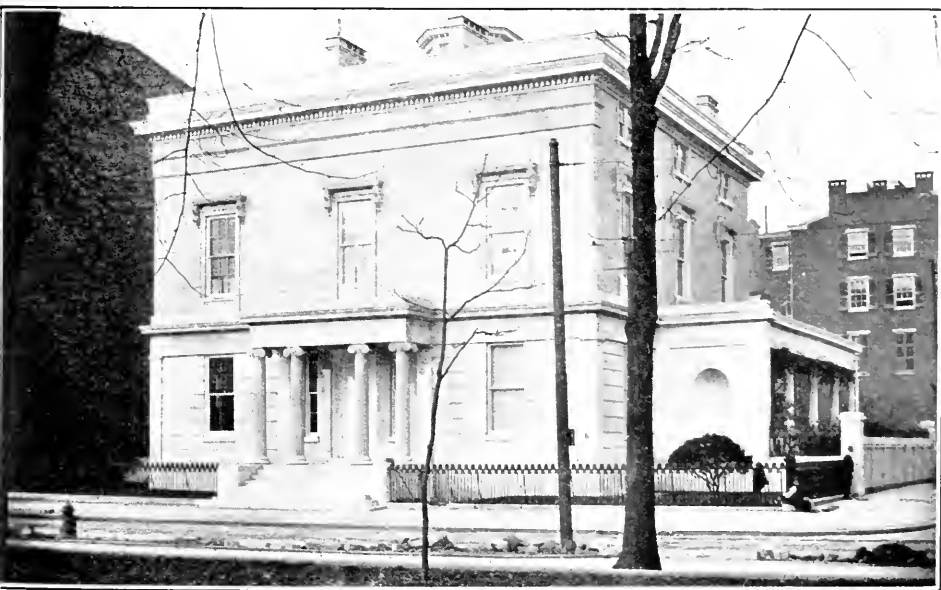
The venerable Colonnade on Lafayette Place (Plate LV) probably makes its last public appearance in this review as among the remains of our Transitional period. Half of it is already gone, while the other half is in imminent danger. This row of dwelling-houses should not be confounded in any way with that other row known as London Terrace of Chelsea village (Twenty-third Street), because the Lafayette Place



DOORWAY, NEW YORK CITY.



THE DE ZENG HOUSE, MIDDLETOWN, CONN.



THE ROBERTS HOUSE, RITTENHOUSE SQUARE, PHILADELPHIA.

10. 1940
1940/11/12

The Transitional Period

houses were the "real stuff," those of the London Terrace are sham in comparison.

In the Colonnade there dwelt at different times many noted individuals. When the first John Jacob Astor decided to devote some of his money to art, the Astor library and other gracious projects, he looked about him for some men of a gentler type than those with whom he had rubbed elbows in the accumulation of his wealth—men of some literary and artistic achievement who would be competent to direct the proposed outlay. Such spirits were rare in the forties, and Mr. Astor had difficulty in finding them. He induced the poet Halleck to become his protégé, and Washington Irving to pay him extended visits. I am not sure that Washington Irving was considered a guest of Mr. Astor when he lived in apartments at the Colonnade, but as he was often entrusted with various commissions in matters of literature and art, and the financing of same for Mr. Astor, who lived just over the way, it was nearly the same thing.

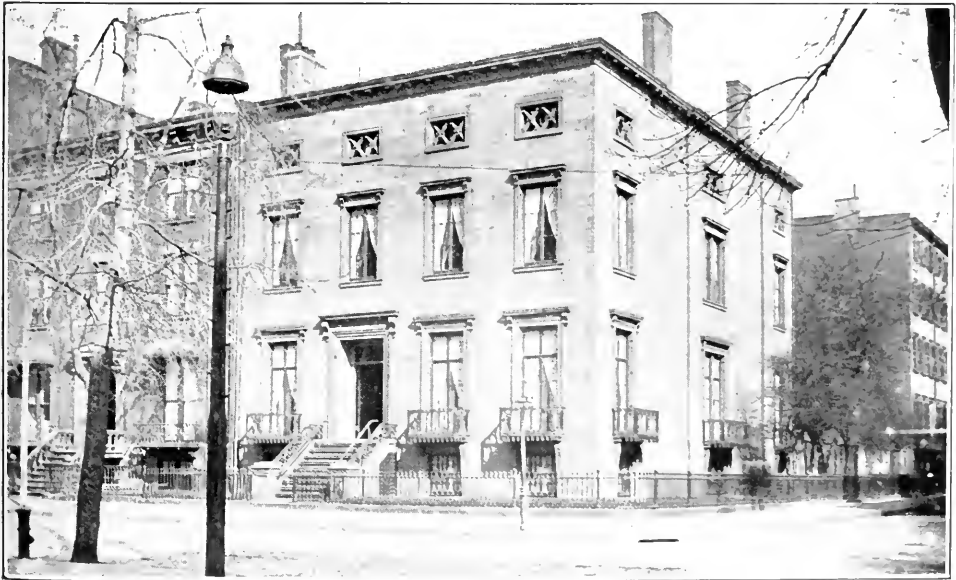
Washington Irving spoke and wrote the English language correctly, an uncommon accomplishment in

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his time, and for which the American people paid him nearly a quarter of a million dollars in royalties. He was the dilettante par excellence of his epoch, who, without having anything in particular to say, said it very gracefully. They did not pay according to real genius in the Transitional period, for otherwise, Poe should have made a fortune with two of his poems alone—namely, “The Raven” and “The Bells,” which we know, as a matter of fact, he did not. However, Washington Irving had his own mission to perform, though it must have been with extreme reluctance that he quitted his snug bachelor quarters at Wolfert’s Roost for the then palatial surroundings of the Colonnade even to serve Mr. Astor. For if you accept the hospitality of very rich people—and if you can do anything worth while you do not want for invitations—you are generally expected to return every penny’s worth of it in some way. Niecks in his “Life of Chopin” relates how when the “grand artiste” was asked to play after dinner at the hôtel of an opulent host, he begged off, pleading that he had eaten so very little, which was true enough, for the malady from which he suffered sadly



GOOD ARCHITECTURE OF THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD IN LOWER FIFTH AVENUE. NO. 1 FIFTH AVENUE.



WATERBURY HOME, FIFTH AVE. AND 11th ST.



REMAINING HALF OF THE COLONNADE.
Its Positively Last Appearance



TYPICAL ARCHITECTURE OF THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD.

to your
attention

The Transitional Period

impaired his appetite. But we are not all such consummate masters of our art as was Chopin of his, and do not dare say such things, however well merited they may be. Washington Irving saw that he could be of service to his country by telling the "old gentleman," as he alludes to his patron in the "Life and Letters, etc.," how to avoid banality and vulgarisms, and the Astor library was the largest and most important public charity that had yet been attempted.

In an age when the anatomy of charity is under the microscope of many a millionaire as to-day, it seems discouraging that its secret is yet likely to remain unrevealed. But let us acknowledge to ourselves, are we not hindered to a very great extent by that awkward condition imposed upon us by every religion that one hand is not to know what the other is about? And of course, you know, that really takes all the fun out of charity.

CHAPTER VIII

REIGN OF TERROR—ITS NEGATIVE VALUE

ALISON, Carlyle and all the great historiographers who have essayed the French Revolution go into long preambles of the causes leading up to the principal drama, antedating, by some years, the assembling of the States-general. I am very fond of the opening chosen by Charles Dickens for his "Tale of Two Cities," namely, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." The contradictory statement is yet so graphic as to suggest to my mind all the preamble I need for a chapter upon the Reign of Terror in American domestic architecture, especially as I have already touched upon the remote causes in preceding chapters.

If money was ever to be made without the impending shadow of nervous prostration and heart failure—I mean a decent sum of money, a competency—that opportunity presented itself with dazzling splendor in



"And that house with the Coopilow's his'n." BRET HARTE.



A FIFTH AVENUE MANSION DURING THE REIGN OF TERROR.

Reign of Terror—Its Negative Value

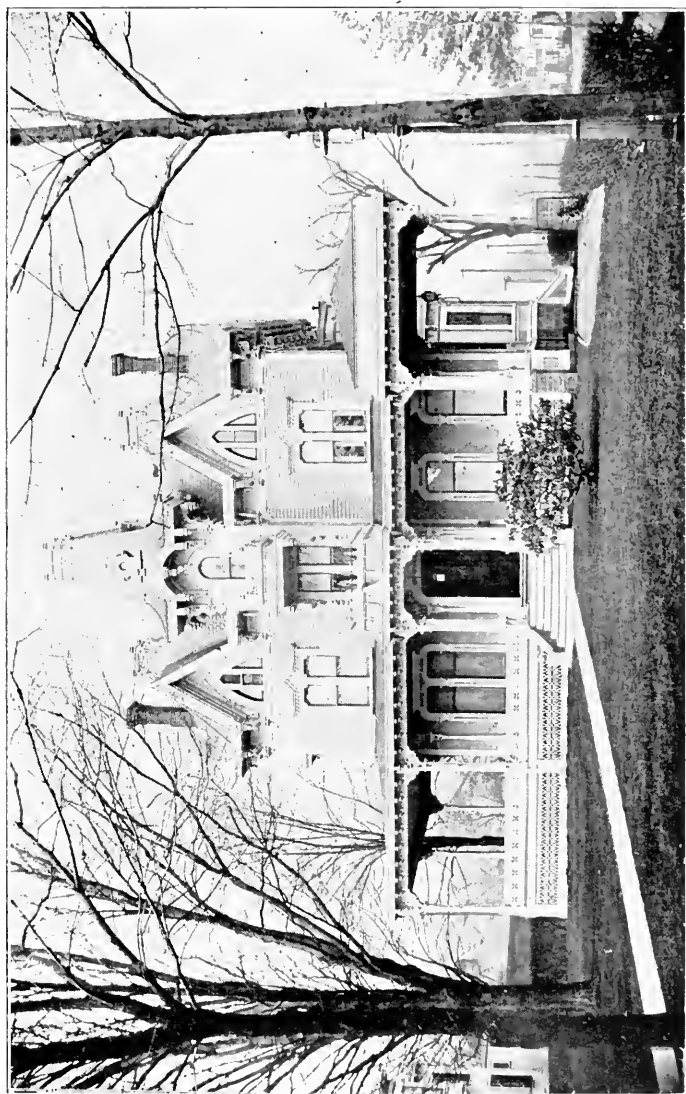
the loyal States of the Union during the latter years of the civil war and those immediately succeeding. All kinds of property advanced in value, no matter what the kind was. Anything—even cobblestones would have been a good purchase. The great boom of the Transitional period was entirely eclipsed, and people who never expected to be wealthy, people with the humblest ambitions, people whose callings, ordinarily, would not warrant any such hopes, had affluence literally forced upon them. I am sorry that most of the fortunes thus made had to be lost again upon the inevitable return of normal conditions—sorry as I am when I read a story of Captain Kidd, that the treasure-box has always to sink out of sight at the moment when the happy finders are rejoicing, and the future seems assured.

I do not know of a political economist, not excepting Henry George, who has had “the nerve,” shall I say, to attribute any of the blessings of civilization to war, pestilence and catastrophes. Yet, as nearly as a spectator may judge by effects, these direful things are all conducive to the greatest amount of comfort and

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case of those who do not dwell too close to the points of friction. The swifter is dissolution, up to a certain ratio, at least, with the number of births, the greater the wealth, per capita, for the survivors. The survivors of the civil war who lived in the undevastated territory of the Northern States were largely a happy lot. It began to look for them as though God had decided to abolish the odds in favor of the bank, so to speak, and that life would be, henceforward, a square game affording everybody a chance to nibble at the crust of prosperity, not each one subject to gain only as another is bereft. Some inexorable condition appeared to have given way, for, at last, there was enough to go 'round—yes, more than enough; and with their surplus funds mounting higher and higher, these alarmingly prosperous people were much addicted to the erection of houses with “coopilows.”

In the books of published designs which circulated at the period, dwelling-houses of this class were called “Italian villas,” although as we have come to know the Italian villa, especially since the art of photography has brought it to our intimate acquaintance, we fail to



"I think that Dante's more abstruse estates meant to personify the mathematics." Dos Juan.

Reign of Terror—Its Negative Value

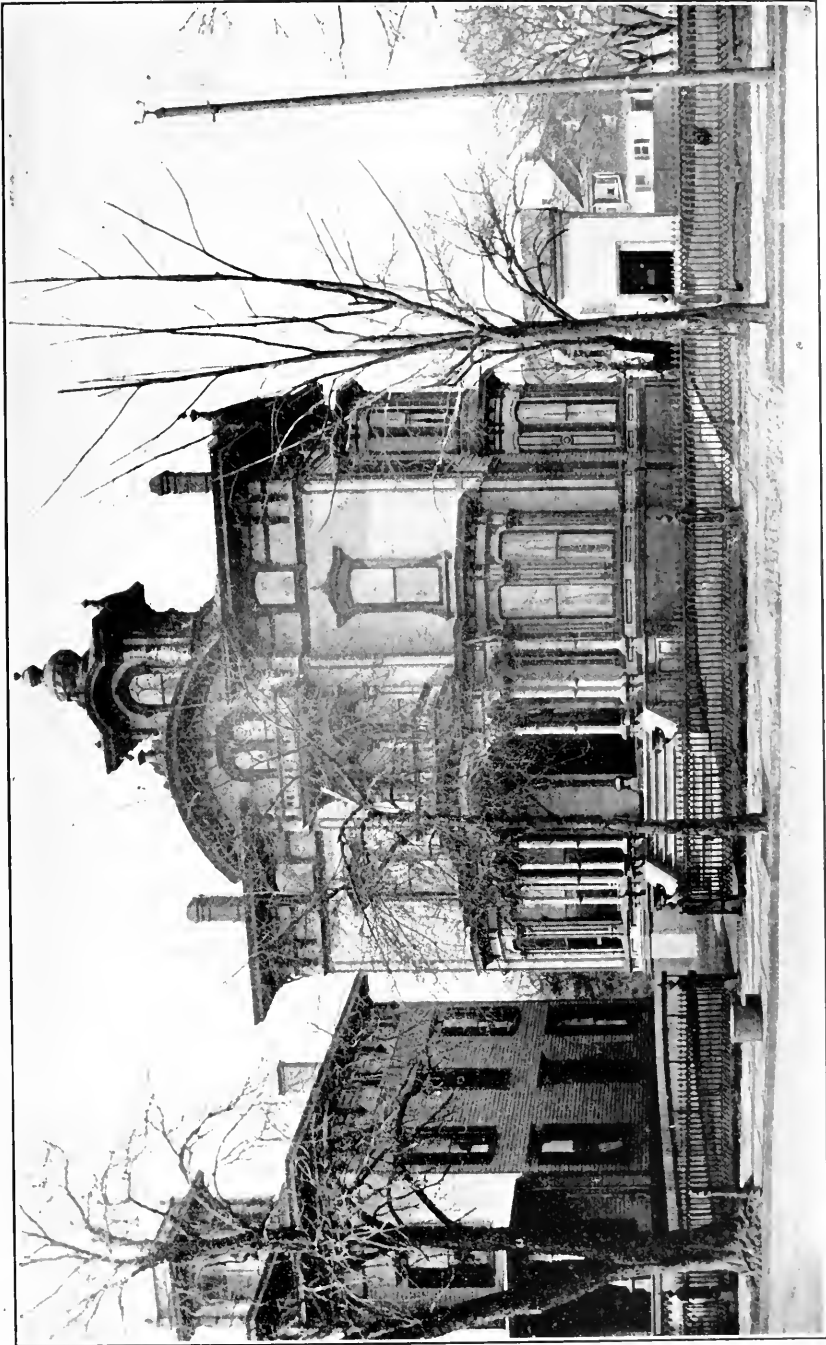
see any actual resemblance. The house with the cupola in America was, in effect, a newly-invented style of architecture of its era, no doubt suggested by the sumptuous villas of the Italian Renaissance, since they have always suggested prodigious opulence, and would naturally attract a people who had suddenly become rich. Besides, in no other style of building that I have seen could a dollar be made to make more show than in the cupola-house of our Reign of Terror. The art of pretentiousness was never better understood, and no art has responded more quickly to a popular demand.

The photograph of a house, which I have not the heart to publish, recalls to memory the story of an old gentleman, now some years deceased, who at the height of his career started out to build the most fanciful house that anybody could possibly imagine. "Fanciful" was the word he used, and appears to have been the favorite adjective of Jacobinical builders. It seemed to me that he succeeded marvelously well, as I cannot picture to myself a greater number of odd conceits in a limited area than he achieved, nor do I see how the scroll-saw could be made to perform greater

American Renaissance

wonders; but I knew not the resources of those clever artificers. A still more fanciful house, he told me, which he afterwards discovered, caused the ambitious builder of whom I write to grow somewhat dissatisfied; for after all his pains his own house had failed to capture the prize. He had not made it fanciful enough. His property, however, advanced so rapidly in value upon his hands, and was considered so beautiful withal by those of the ultra-Jacobin party, that about the year 1869 he was enabled to dispose of his disappointment for \$50,000. And I do not want to leave you to suppose that in this sale there were considerations of exchange or mortgages entailing a modicum of equity as the only cash transaction happening so frequently in the difficult real estate deals we effect to-day. No, the \$50,000 represented all cash, which ample fortune, together with, perhaps, as much again, this remarkable person managed to lose in the national liquidation of the early seventies. Fancy \$100,000 getting away very easily from any one in his right senses now!

The only explanation that can be offered why so many of the snug fortunes of those best and worst of



“There were the sincere Radicals.”



"And the scaramouches."

1940
1941

Reign of Terror—Its Negative Value

times miraculously disappeared is to be found in the hypothesis that the majority of the people were utterly incompetent both by education and experience to manage the vast amounts of money that had, as magic, rolled up while they slept.

But there were two kinds of Jacobin houses, there were the sincere Radicals (see Plate LVIII), and the Scaramouches (see Plate LIX). In other words it was another struggle between the Girondists and the Mountain—the moderately-minded folks and the ultra-revolutionists. Examples of the Scaramouches are becoming difficult to obtain, they give the present generation such indescribable pains in the head to be continually seeing them that every year their owners cause them to be altered or to disappear altogether one after another. A perfect nightmare of a house upon which I relied for my *pièce de résistance* in this chapter was recently remodeled before I could make a picture of it in all its pristine extravagance: and the next reviewer of Jacobin architecture will find the Scaramouches still rarer acquisitions. But I truly regret when I see a Jacobin house of the better sort (see the

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one illustrated in Plate LVIII), losing its character to make conform to a later fashion in architecture because of certain didactic purposes which it would serve as originally designed.

This Jacobin house exhibits a very creditable composition after the manner of the Reign of Terror; and if we accept the standard by which we judge the newly invented architecture of our own day which I had the honor to illustrate in the second chapter of this review (see Plate VIII), the Jacobin house has but one fault—a fault, by the way, that admits of argument, too—it is out of fashion. The two designs are equally original, equally dauntless and equally successful from the standpoint of harmony, good lines, balance, proportion and all the more obscure terms artists invoke to impress the neophyte while often groping in the dark, themselves for the touchstone whereby they may discern what is good and what is bad in architecture.

Now, every well-trained mind has the sense of order developed to a very high degree, and everything that tends toward order and harmony is, naturally, grateful to it; while that which tends to disorder, want of pur-



FRANCO-AMERICAN ROOF, TYPICAL EXAMPLE.



"Jacobin architecture was, at least, symmetrical."

Reign of Terror—Its Negative Value

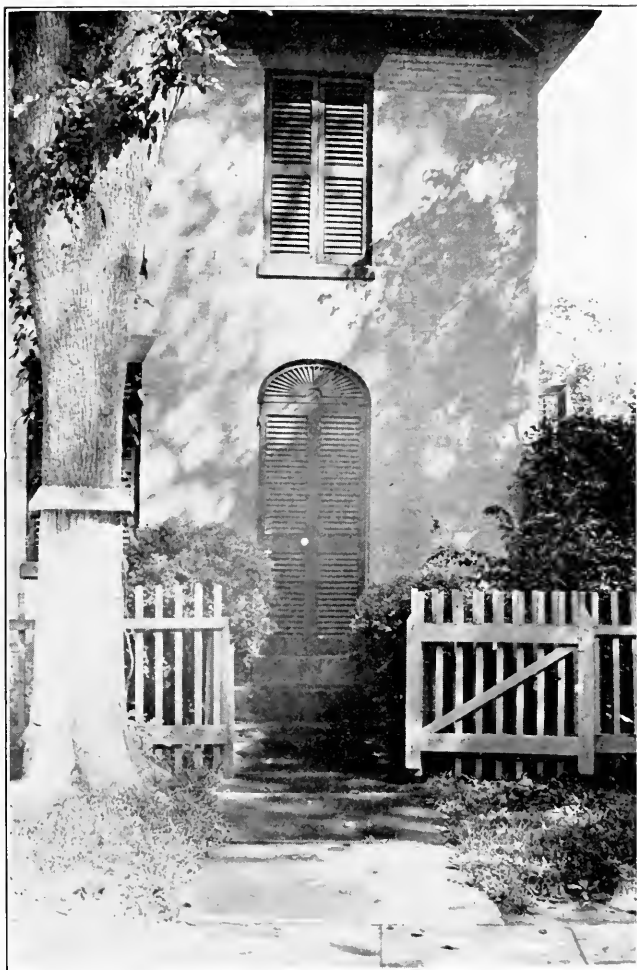
pose and method is always repugnant. Hence, if we eliminate the matter of fashion, I cannot see wherein newly invented architecture has any material advantage over that less recently invented except that, in some ways, we have in the former a much simpler design. The Jacobin house is over-decorated; but we must give it odds as in a handicap to make up for the progress in matters of taste the nation is supposed to have made in thirty-five years. Strip it of its meretricious ornament, if you please, and I prefer the lighter grace of the Jacobin exemplar.

Still, granted for the moment that these two antithetical schools of design, both palpable products of the modern brain enfranchised from all considerations of precedent, are equal measured by the laws of harmony and logic alone, it does seem almost beyond belief that the newly invented architecture of this epoch, for which such fine promises are made in all good faith by representative architects, is destined to acquire quite the discreditable reputation of the Reign of Terror, and by the inconstancy of fashion. Yet, is it not inevitable?

The only attribute that perpetuates a style of archi-

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ecture in the resistless march of events is the historic atmosphere the said style may be made to embody. For this and nothing else has posterity the slightest use. Clever as were the architects of the Jacobin houses—and I consider some of them to have been very clever—clever as are the inventors of our newest type of building expression, there are no inherent qualities in the work of either school of design that will serve historical succession. Invented architecture has no more atmosphere than exists upon the surface of the moon. It may divert popular fancy for a time. We may discuss the subtleties of mass and moulding to satiety. To the human heart by which we live, dependent upon personal associations, these abstract discussions mean just about as much as love means in tennis. Harmonious lines have merely a negative value, they do not grate upon the nerves, they do not offend the eye; but unless the personal reminiscence—the history of one's antecedents—is discernable through the academic integument, the lines, themselves, cannot long satisfy the mind reaching out for companionship in all its concerns.



"I never was so glad to get home, in my life."

Reign of Terror—Its Negative Value

Were it not for these psychological needs of ours, one might do much worse, even now, than build himself a not too grotesque Scaramouch house. Jacobin architecture was, at least, symmetrical (see Plate LX), and in plan that it was eminently sensible cannot be denied. The rooms were square, commodious and airy, amplified by numerous bay-windows, besides being so arranged as to open en suite with either folding or sliding doors. The windows were tall, generally extending from floor to ceiling, affording the best of light and ventilation. The second story enjoyed the relative advantages of the first, while every cubic inch of the third story was available for bedrooms owing to the economy there is in the Mansart roof. Then, piazza space was generous to a fault, a porte-cochère went without the saying, and I must add that in all this there was a gracious note. Indeed, there is no good reason that I can see why we should not exploit Jacobin architecture to-day, save one, and it is just *that* :—
“Man cannot live by bread alone.”

CHAPTER IX

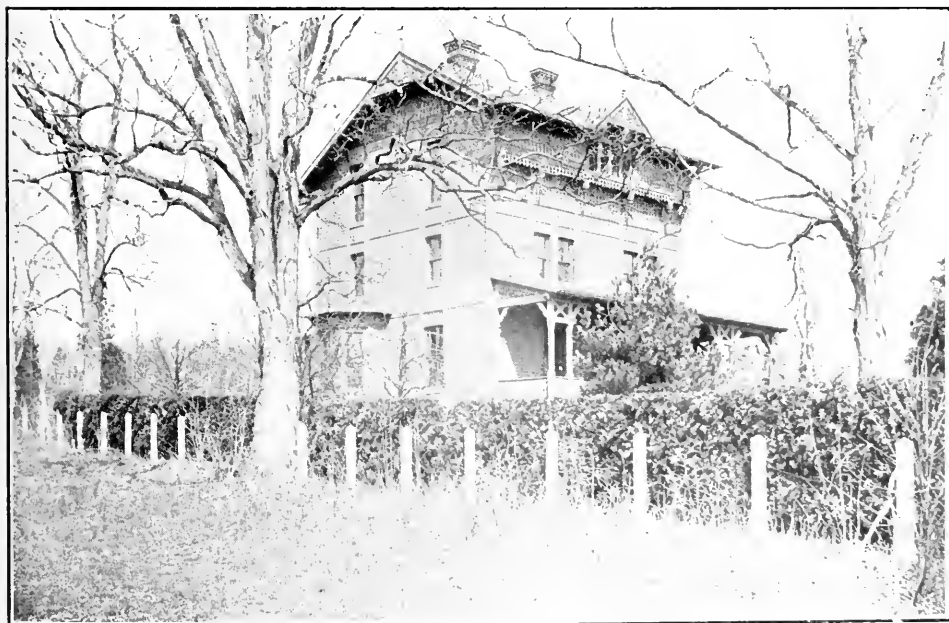
FASHION IN ARCHITECTURE

THE milestones of art are the signboards of history. Political moves may or may not signify. Treaties international are usually effected by skilful diplomacy, foes may be bluffed by naval and military manœuvres; but the art of a nation betrays its innermost confidences—the stuff whereof 'tis made.

If, however, as happened at the Centennial Exposition in 1876, a political advent coincides with one in art, that milestone becomes an epoch-marker extraordinary. In 1876 the arts of the world, for the first time, were made to pass before this people as an alluring pageant, and a general desire to avail ourselves of them returned to replace the vacuum that had existed since the platform of Andrew Jackson denounced the refinements of life as attributes of an overbearing aristocracy, patroons and manor-lords, and necessarily



ULTRA-FASHIONABLE, QUEEN-ANNE ARCHITECTURE.



FASHIONABLE HOUSE—EASTLAKE SCHOOL.

Fashion in Architecture

fraught with every danger to a nation's liberty and strength.

But let us see how unintelligently, nevertheless, we went about the new art movement. Like the North American Indian who habitually first learns the vices of civilization, we were not slow to discover the meretricious in whatever art the old world chose to exhibit, and this we began assiduously to adapt, especially in the field of applied ornament.

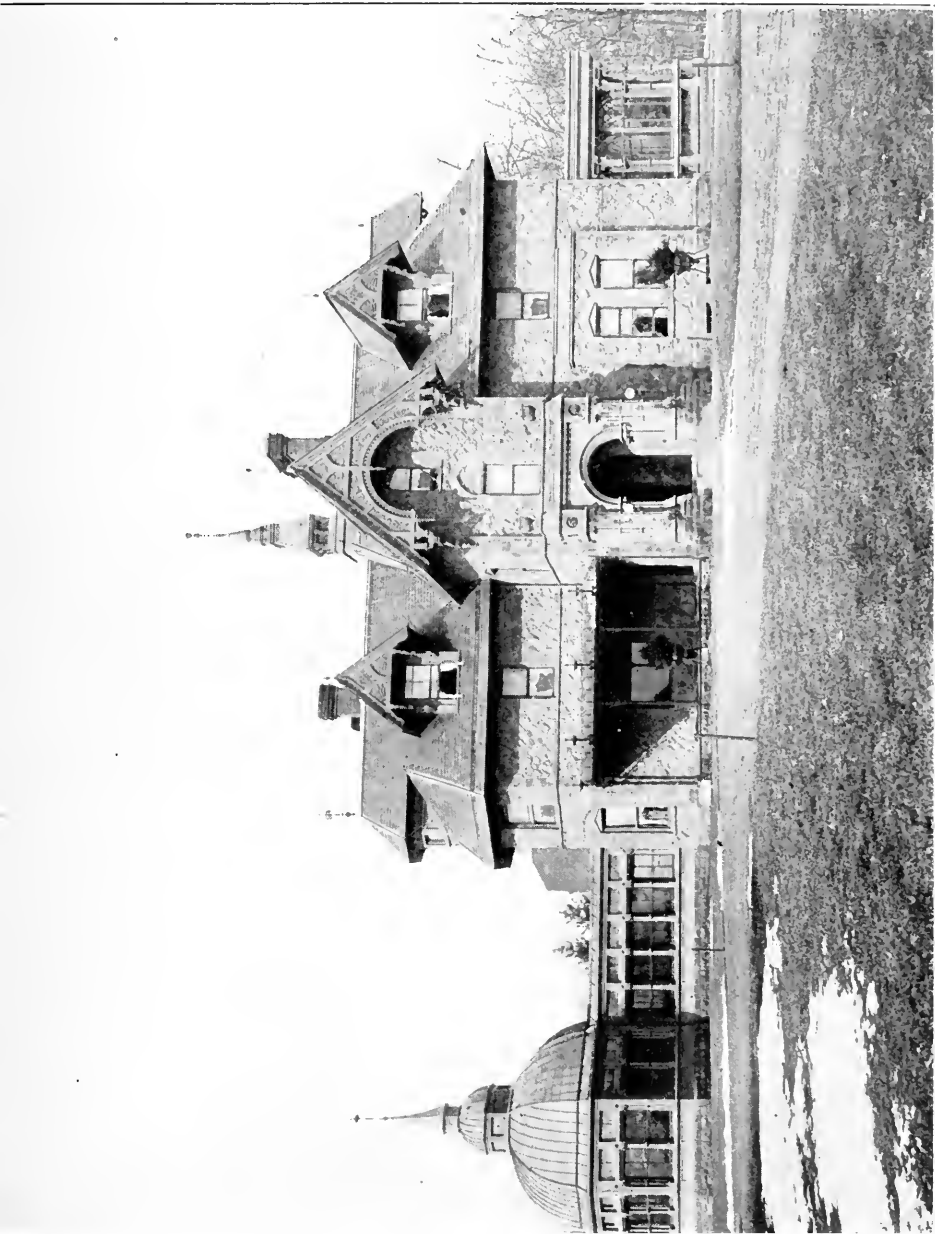
A school of design called the "Eastlake school" (Plate LXII), I believe, was the first to emerge from the confused mass of ideas with which the American brain became suddenly surcharged. As the Rococo in France had been called down by the Empire, so was our Scaramouch architecture of the Reign of Terror, with all its extravagant circular work, called down by the Centennial, and straight lines innumerable—congeries of straight lines—became the rage. Mouldings were no longer returned, but died against perpendicular members the faces of which were also ornamented by lines. With the jig-saw still dangerously convenient there was shortly evolved from the Eastlake propaganda,

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at first devoted to the manufacture of furniture, an American travesty of the eighteenth century chalet of Switzerland. The historic chalets were covered with ornament. On close inspection, however, this ornament was easily seen to be hand carving of the most skilful description; but never mind, our jig-saws could fake it sufficiently well to please a not over-fastidious public taste, and it is hence we derive fashionable house number one.

But the Eastlake style was not the only product of the Centennial. Contemporary if not coördinate was the Romanesque revival undertaken by H. H. Richardson (see Plate V), also a certain type of Victorian-Gothic (see Plate LXIII) associated more or less with the name of Richard Morris Hunt, neither of which could be expressed in wood, and therefore, represented the more expensive fashions. The references to the Romanesque revival which occur in Chapter I of this review will answer, I hope, for that fashion in architecture, so I will proceed with some desultory reflections upon the Victorian-Gothic style.

Mr. Hunt was probably the most remarkable archi-



"BELLWOOD," MADISON, N. J. EPOCH 1879

Fashion in Architecture

tect this country has produced. His professional training occupied some twelve years of his life, which he spent mostly in universities abroad. He told me this himself when I called upon him, now many years since, for encouragement and advice. He sat me upon a high stool in his private office, and related about twelve chapters of his memoirs, as nearly as I can recollect, i. e., one chapter for each year of his prodigious scholarship, all of which I have no doubt was intended for my good, which I trust it has, in some measure, accomplished. Returning to this country laden with scholastic honors, for twenty-five years this brilliant *diplomé* concerned himself principally with academic detail. Rarely did he go beyond the integument of a structure with his characteristic impress, apparently satisfied to decorate according to the canons of the Ecole des Beaux Arts the architecture *sui generis* of America.

About this time the Victorian-Gothic school of design was advertising its merits, in which school Mr. Hunt found a congenial medium to exploit his essentially grammatical detail, and Bellwood at Madison,

American Renaissance

New Jersey, supplies me a fine example of this once very fashionable architecture and of Mr. Hunt's work of that period. In 1897 I was consulted by Mr. Bell, who had purchased the place from Mr. Twombly, regarding a proposed extension to the house. Although not at all in sympathy with what Montgomery Schuyler calls Mr. Hunt's "staccato style," I remembered the episode of Michelangelo and the plans of St. Peter's by Bramante, and advised that the ruling spirit in any new work directly attached to the main building of the estate should be Victorian-Gothic notwithstanding that the style had gone completely out of vogue, and I myself, had been obliged to remove some of the interior woodwork for Mr. Bell, which, while academic in every line, was crying ugly—so ugly that nobody could look at it a minute without irritability. But my devotion to art lost me the only profitable part of the work, for Carrère and Hastings were subsequently employed to erect an Elizabethan end which I have taken care not to show in the illustration, not because of lack of architectonic merit in the extension, but because it impairs just so much of the historic value of the subject.

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Technically, Bellwood is admirable. It looks to me just like the Earl of Beaconsfield and the Congress of Berlin or the period at which the Victorian age was in the midst of glory, but from the standpoint of true, Anglo-Saxon home feeling, it does not satisfy. Mr. Hunt was an academician above everything. We see this one idea in all his early work, its culmination regardless of ugliness being exploited in the *Tribune* Building in Park Row.

But a new mission in life awaited Mr. Hunt. After all these years of mediocrity of talent, and when he was passed fifty years of age, it was as if some angel had descended in the night while he slept, and had whispered the one magic word with which he was ever after to immortalize himself, namely—"Adaptation!" For suddenly, without a word of warning, this remarkable man designed the house of W. K. Vanderbilt at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Fifty-second Street, the pioneer and a very beautiful adaptation of French Renaissance which made its architect famous almost before it was completed (Plate LXX). More than this his success with the new medium of expression in

American Renaissance

which Mr. Hunt soon received other commissions, attracted to his office the life-long clients of other architects to whom no angels had whispered, and who were without sensations of their own. Notably was it so in the case of Mrs. Gerry, who had just come into possession of her father's money, and who did not hesitate to turn down her father's architects as well as those who had faithfully served her husband in order that Mr. Hunt might build her new house at Sixty-first Street; while even the late Cornelius Vanderbilt would not positively decide upon the amplification of his enormous dwelling at Fifty-eighth Street until Mr. Hunt had consulted with his architect. This was a signal tribute to Mr. Hunt, and required the greatest delicacy upon his part, to which I believe he was equal.

In justice to the apparent partiality of the adaptation angel for Mr. Hunt, I must say that he was not entirely alone in her favors, but that there were other architects who had learned how to adapt English Renaissance of the Georges as cleverly as Mr. Hunt could adapt French châteaux, and who were, therefore, not seriously inconvenienced. But I see I am running before my



A QUEEN-ANNE HOUSE AT SHORT HILLS, N. J.

FREDERICK B. WHITE (deceased), Architect.



AN ULTRA-FASHIONABLE COLONIAL HOUSE OF THE PRESENT DAY. 1904.

Fashion in Architecture

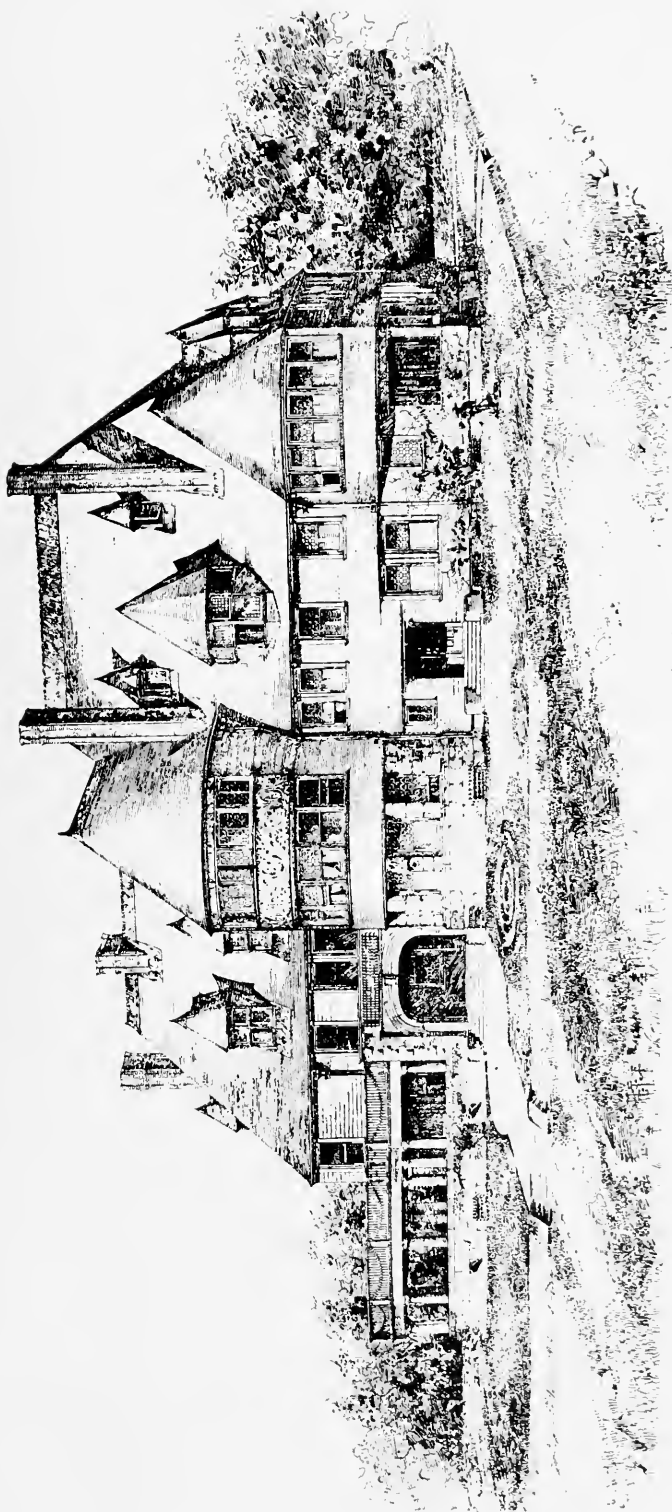
horse to market, and must reserve the consideration of this later architectural development for a chapter upon the art of adaptation while I return for the present to "Fashion in Architecture."

And now I come to a much execrated style of architecture—the Queen Anne style, the last direct influence of the Centennial Exposition and the first fashion to incorporate the vital spark of Anglo-Saxon home feeling. It was the suggestion of historic home atmosphere, though much disguised with American nonsense, that appealed to the better educated people without their knowing it. They thought Queen Anne architecture to be merely another clever fashion, more clever because odder and stranger than any of its predecessors; indeed, the architects themselves, most expert with its vagaries, could not have told you the real secret of its popularity. Like all fashions in architecture, it was burlesqued and ruined while its most active votaries still living have passed on to a higher plane—the plane of adaptation—and do not like to reflect upon the Queen Anne houses they once erected. The fact of it was, the nation was groping in the dark.

American Renaissance

and if the truth must be told, it is groping in the dark still; but we have learned this much beyond refutation: a purely sensational and affected style of architecture such as was the Queen Anne style practised in this country is relegated now to the cheap speculative builder; the better class of Americans know that the secret of successful architecture does not lie in odd conceits and invention, at any rate.

There was once a young man named Frederick B. White, whose short and brilliant life is worth putting on record here. For if there was ever an architect who was *facile princeps* with Queen Anne architecture, it was he. He came from Princeton University at a time when the revival was in its first flush, and nobody, it seems to me, ever grasped the spirit of the style in so admirable a way. In Plate LXIV I have the honor of presenting an edifying example of this architect's work, the Queen Anne dwelling-house at its best, and between this example and the Queen Anne house shown in Plate LXII the reader will, without doubt, note many degrees of deterioration in both taste and harmony.



A COUNTRY HOUSE, SAN MATEO, CAL.

BRUCE PRICE, Architect.

Fashion in Architecture

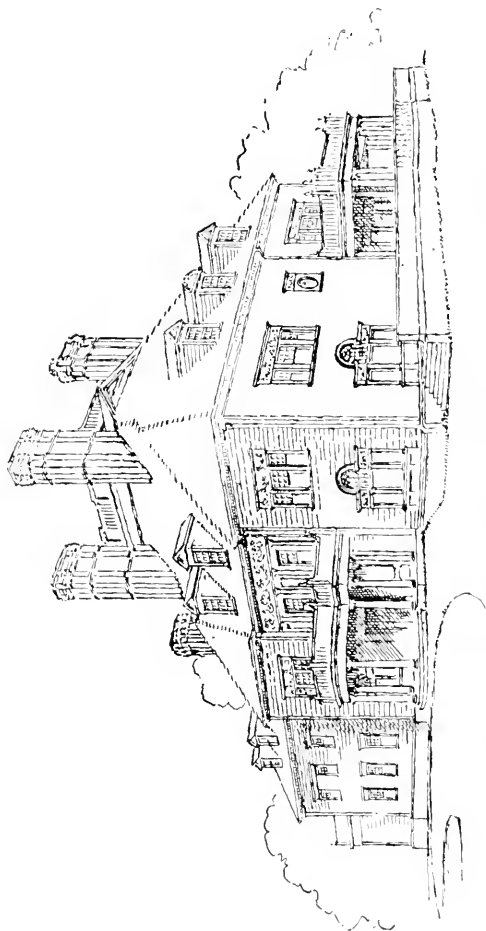
To make his audience at the Brooklyn Tabernacle laugh the late Dr. Talmage called the Queen Anne style the most abominable of all styles of architecture. But when legitimately developed there is nothing the matter with the Queen Anne style at all. It was the Jacobin and bastard features without antecedents and *raison d'être* that brought it into ridicule, and caused a composite style of American dwelling-house, Queen Anne in motive but Romanesque in detail, to make the necessary apologies to the public in the guise of an improved substitute. (See Plate LXV.) Though an avowed composition crossed by this strain and by that, the Queen Anne substitute was yet academic and correct in all its detail, and has survived to this day. I mean to say that this ingenious composite style is still exploited by representative architects. It can be made to simulate home-feeling after a fashion, although there is always that bizarre note present which characterizes fashion as its first object, while by no stretch of the imagination may we associate our ancestors or history with such a palpably modern American suburbanite as is illustrated herewith.

American Renaissance

I know not whose perspicacity it was that first discovered in the Colonial exemplars of the Grand Epoch a fashion the popularity of which was soon to eclipse all the foregoing fashions I have enumerated, and which, moreover, continues to be most in vogue. But the Colonial germ, during the early eighties, seems to have been in the air and sporadic throughout the country. It is the greatest fallacy, however, to say, as many learned reviewers of Colonial architecture do, that its symmetry, restfulness and good proportion generally caused it to rise superior to other schools of design, because that is not true. The preceding styles properly developed all had compensating virtues. The secret of the Colonial revival was the same inherent vital spark that had previously commended the Queen Anne architecture, only the Colonial houses possessed it to a far greater degree. For it was not only English history, always intimately associated with our own, that they expressed, but authentic memoirs of the American people themselves.

To the first Colonial revivalists the true merit of the Colonial houses was entirely latent in them, though

Fashion in Architecture



THE H. A. C. TAYLOR HOUSE, NEWPORT, R. I. EPOCH, 1885.
(From a sketch by the Author.)

American Renaissance

influenced by it as by a magnet : and I regret that the cleverest architects to-day are still working upon the fallacious formula of symmetry, restfulness and good proportion while they often garble American history with much interpolated foreign material and anachronism. I do not want the reader to suppose that the ultra-fashionable Colonial house herein illustrated (Plate LXIV), was the work of the cleverest architect in America, but I needed to make clear this point about interpolated material, and so have selected a most unblushing example of it.

On page 129 I submit a hurriedly executed sketch of one of our earliest adaptations of a Colonial house of the Grand Epoch. This house was designed in 1885 by some of our cleverest architects indeed, though it is extremely doubtful if they had any deeper purpose in it than to exploit a fashionable dwelling for Newport at the time. To-day, these same architects would do it very differently. On no account would they put two Palladian windows with huge sheets of plate glass in such close conjunction as is seen in the sketch imposing triplet windows with cornices, elaborated by



DOORWAY AT SHARON, CONN.

"By evening I was so tired looking at fashionable architecture that my invitation to supper at Aunt Muriel's was grateful beyond words. We had sugar-cured ham (cured on the place) home-made bread, toasted and buttered, Ceylon tea, brewed at table from an antique Dresden tea-caddie, old-fashioned raised cake, and honey as put up by the bees."

Figure 1. The effect of the number of trials on the number of correct responses. The number of correct responses was significantly higher than the number of incorrect responses in all cases. The number of correct responses was significantly higher than the number of incorrect responses in all cases. The number of correct responses was significantly higher than the number of incorrect responses in all cases.

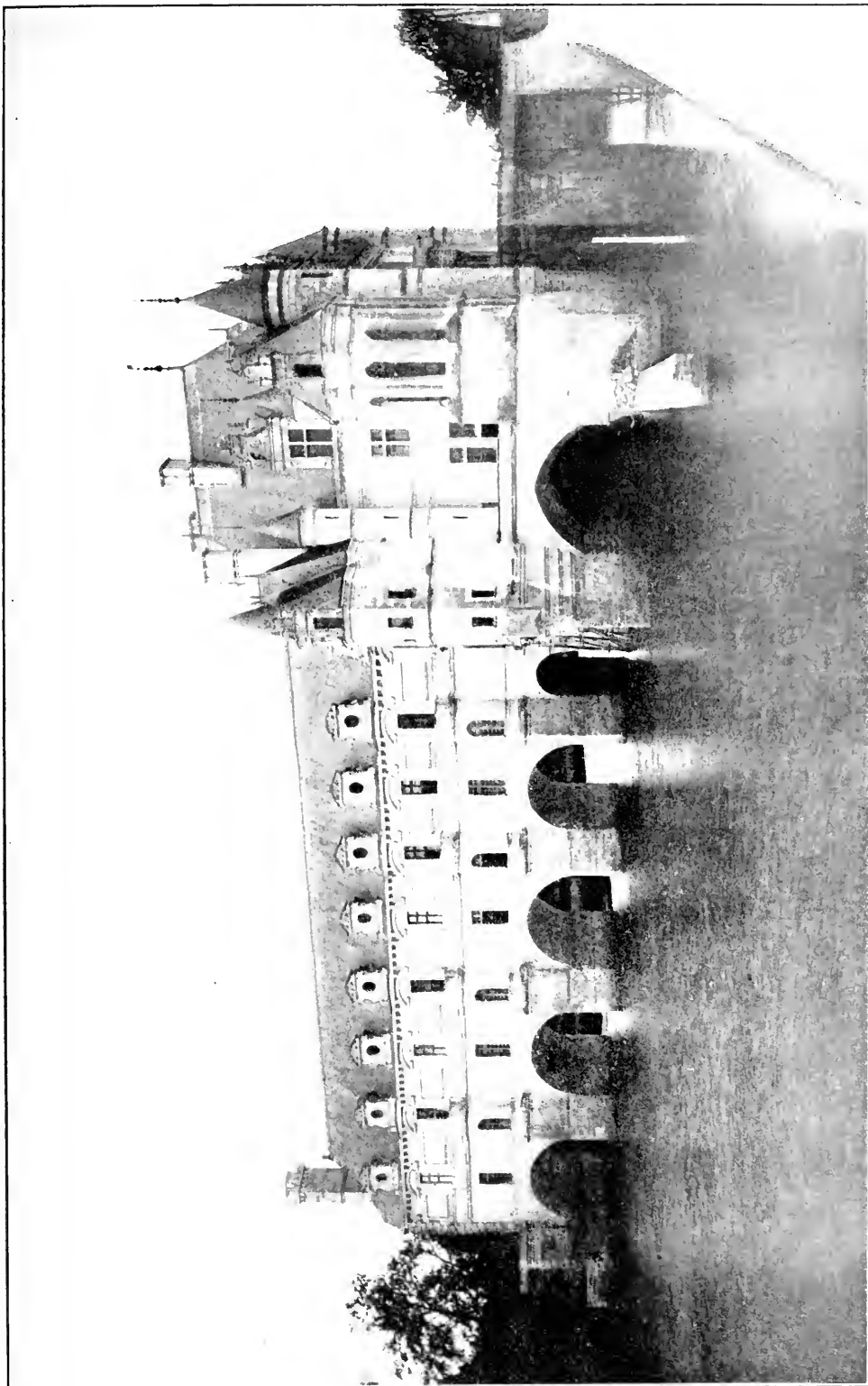
Fashion in Architecture

applied ornament directly overhead. Such modern obtrusion would be relegated to their draughtsman who has set up in business for himself, and to whom they might direct the poorer-class client seeking a low-priced plan. Experience alone has taught these architects that the closer the adaptation up to a certain point, the greater the success. I do not believe that they ever think of expressing history in executing their designs. Certainly, they do not look upon their profession as eleemosynary to make the world a more beautiful world, a kindlier world, a happier world for mankind generally. The chances are they are still figuring very closely with American cunning and expediency for commercial martinet, whose favor means the largest commissions, and whose unwelcome personal influence we so often run across when least expecting in modern architecture, and which is sure to disenchant us with it.

CHAPTER X

ADAPTATION

A REPRESENTATIVE architect in New York city has declared impressively, "We are no longer architects, but adapters!" To him, looking upon his own achievement and that of his contemporaries as well as the general tendency of the times in which we live, it seemed, indeed, he had framed an unimpeachable aphorism. It is a funny thing about architecture :—nearly as it concerns our every day needs, much as it is criticised about our ears, our knowledge of it, nevertheless, continues to be absurdly inexact and experimental. I am speaking now of architecture as a fine art, not as the science of an engineer. One has only to read the reviews to note how little the authors themselves know to tell us, how they go 'round and 'round the animal, with more or less entanglement, as we have read of picadors doing in a bull fight. And when they have finished can we call



Up toward they were coming to, to a river, a smaller, swift-flowing river, and a huge gray building resting upon arches spanned its width. Ascending a little elevation in the road, further on, the vision becomes clearer and fastening to the dreaming horseman. It is the Chateau of Chenonceau. Mrs. Jolly Laidlaw.

Adaptation

to mind a single statement wherein they have committed themselves to anything definite? The whole proposition architectonic is to the average reviewer an egregious bugbear before which he is anything but sure of himself.

He hints at the mysteries of design, half advocating, half condemning, the two salient American traits—namely, originality and enterprise; for he readily sees that if he commends those traits unequivocally, he must acknowledge the architects of our Reign of Terror to have been the greatest of all American architects whose work has passed into history, as they were assuredly the most original and enfranchised. And this, of course, would never do for the Della Cruscan critic of America.

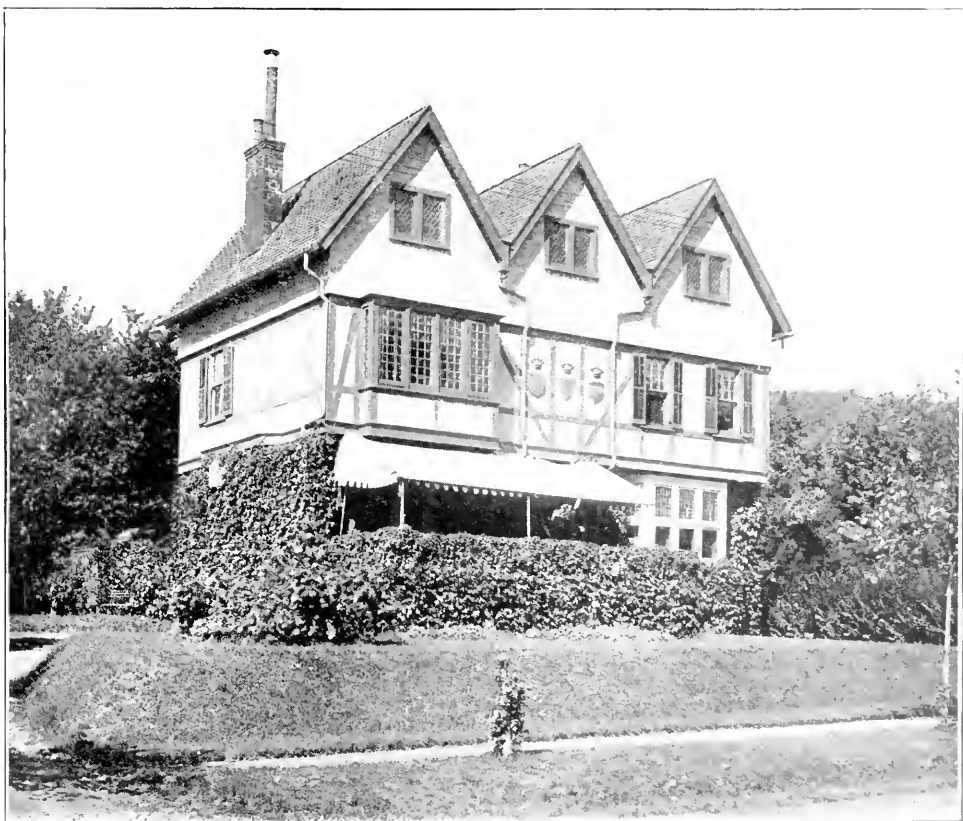
Upon the other hand, he is expected, by a species of professional jealousy which is somehow perennial, to cavil at that kind of architecture called at the present time “adaptation.” From which fault-finding the reader gathers that adaptation is but a polite synonym for cribbing and thieving from the masterpieces of antiquity. Then, while preparing his argument, numer-

American Renaissance

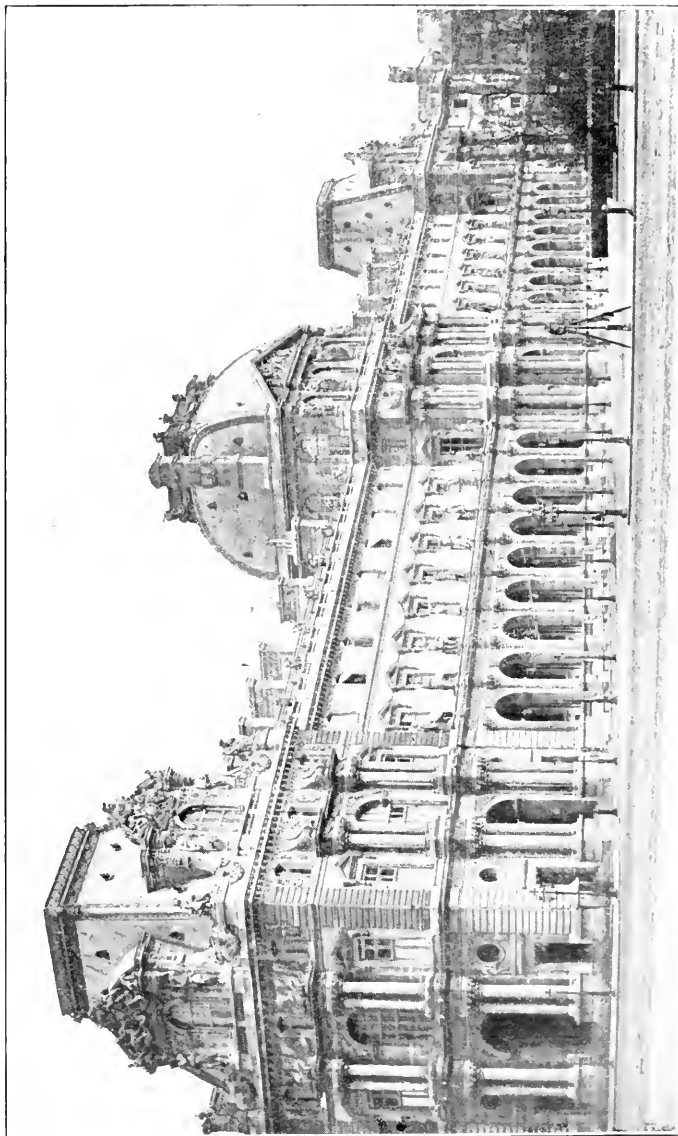
ous contradictory things suggest themselves to the reviewer that are exceedingly difficult of assimilation. If he be fair, sincere with himself, while caviling at adaptation, how can he make use of such a class of architecture as we have exemplified in every-day acquaintances like Trinity Church by Upjohn and Grace Church by Renwick, two intensely American designs, yet gauged by the standard of modern criticism, out and out adaptations of mediæval Gothic! Again, it will not do for him to endeavor to extricate himself with credit by declaring that adaptation belongs by right only to ecclesiastic edifices, for there, before one in a moment, stands the Capitol at Washington sharply cutting a piece out of the blue sky on the horizon of Maryland, the pride of every American citizen, acknowledged to be the most successful specimen of American Renaissance of its class (legislative buildings), yet the most loyal to its Italian antecedents, making the newer State capitols with domes look tawdry in consequence, proportionately as they are less Italian and significant historically. So that altogether the case appears to be one hopelessly involved and complicated.



KINGDOR, SUMMIT, N. J.



CANTERBURY KEYS, WYOMING, N. J.



THE LOUVRE.

Adaptation

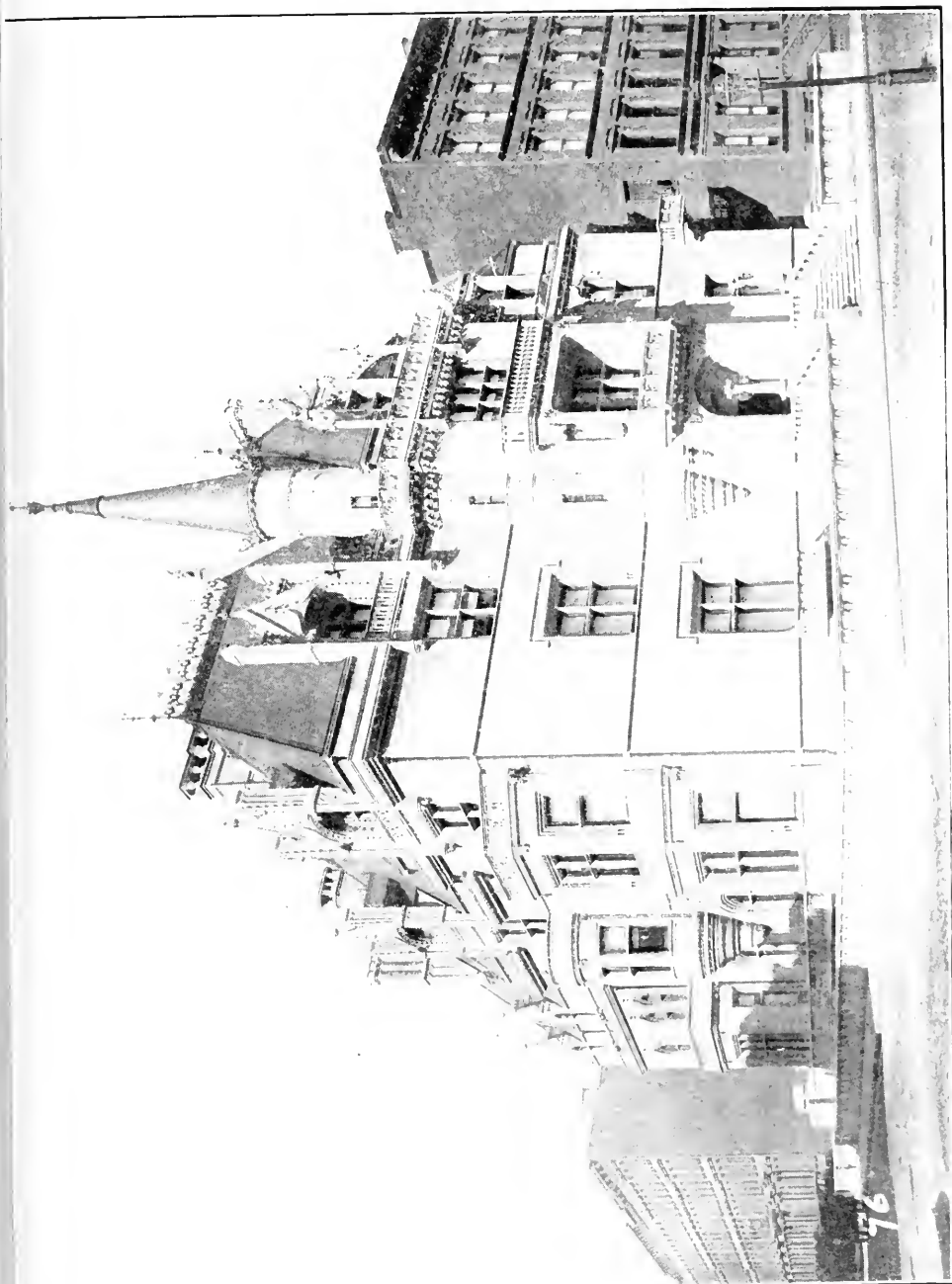
To cry out against adaptation is nothing new, peculiar to our day. It was ever thus from history's early hour. Popular criticism in France during the seventeenth century was against the Louvre, Fontainebleau and Versailles as being Italian palaces without significance in France, save that of national vacuity in the creative faculty. Saint-Simon, in his memoirs of the epoch, makes out Louis XIV, and his principal architect, Hardouin-Mansart, to have been unskilful bunglers. But to us, the splendid monuments are French Renaissance without dissent, thoroughly French and historically correct because they coincide with the legitimate, historic development of that nation's art. They have become part of the French landscape, Italian no longer, just as the now familiar town house of W. K. Vanderbilt, at Fifth Avenue and Fifty-second Street, which in 1883 (see Plate LXX) was so intensely French as to seem entirely out of its element in New York, has gradually grown to look to us what it really always was, i. e., good American Renaissance adapted from the Valois propaganda of architectural composition. In the more recent day of Ruskin it was the fashion to

American Renaissance

belittle the work of Inigo Jones and Sir Christopher Wren as work of no inspiration; and I have no doubt there were architects, once upon a time, envious of the talents of Michelangelo, who did not hesitate to say the great Italian simply copied.

In lieu of further recurrence to all that has since transpired, and is transpiring to-day with the same moral, I should say without qualification that adaptation—let us call it so until we discover a better term—is the soul of architecture, presupposing the highest kind of talent, most extended education, and artistic susceptibility.

How would it fare with an author who coined words habitually in preference to using those given in the dictionary, or who invented a syntax of his own? But, of course, nobody in his right mind would do this. The object of literature is simply to adapt the words and sentences to express our thoughts original so far as we know. In architecture we have the analogy. An architect is bound to adapt in spite of himself; and conversely, the poorest adapters are the poorest architects in whose hands the art of adaptation falls into



VANDERBILT HOUSE, FIFTH AVENUE & 52d ST.

1877

Adaptation

manifest plagiarism—plagiarism mostly of these architects' more successful contemporaries in America. But the varying requirements of individual cases compel even those architects to adapt or else invent to meet contingencies where no precedent is available, so in practice it has come to be that nobody copies anything exactly.

Certainly, nobody copies a building of an earlier epoch that is susceptible of reincarnation to-day. I explained this point very clearly, I imagined, in an article I wrote for the *House Beautiful* in May, 1901, entitled "How to Make a Successful House," which magazine holds the copyright thereof, so that I cannot use the particular reference here I should like to use. The economy of the age would not let an architect reproduce Lambton Castle, for instance (see Plate LXXI), fascinating proposition though it be, and the architect wanted to do so, and could afford the expense of making the necessary minute examination, the necessary drawings and measurements, which I can assure you would be a work onerous and tedious almost beyond endurance for the impatient temperament of an

American Renaissance

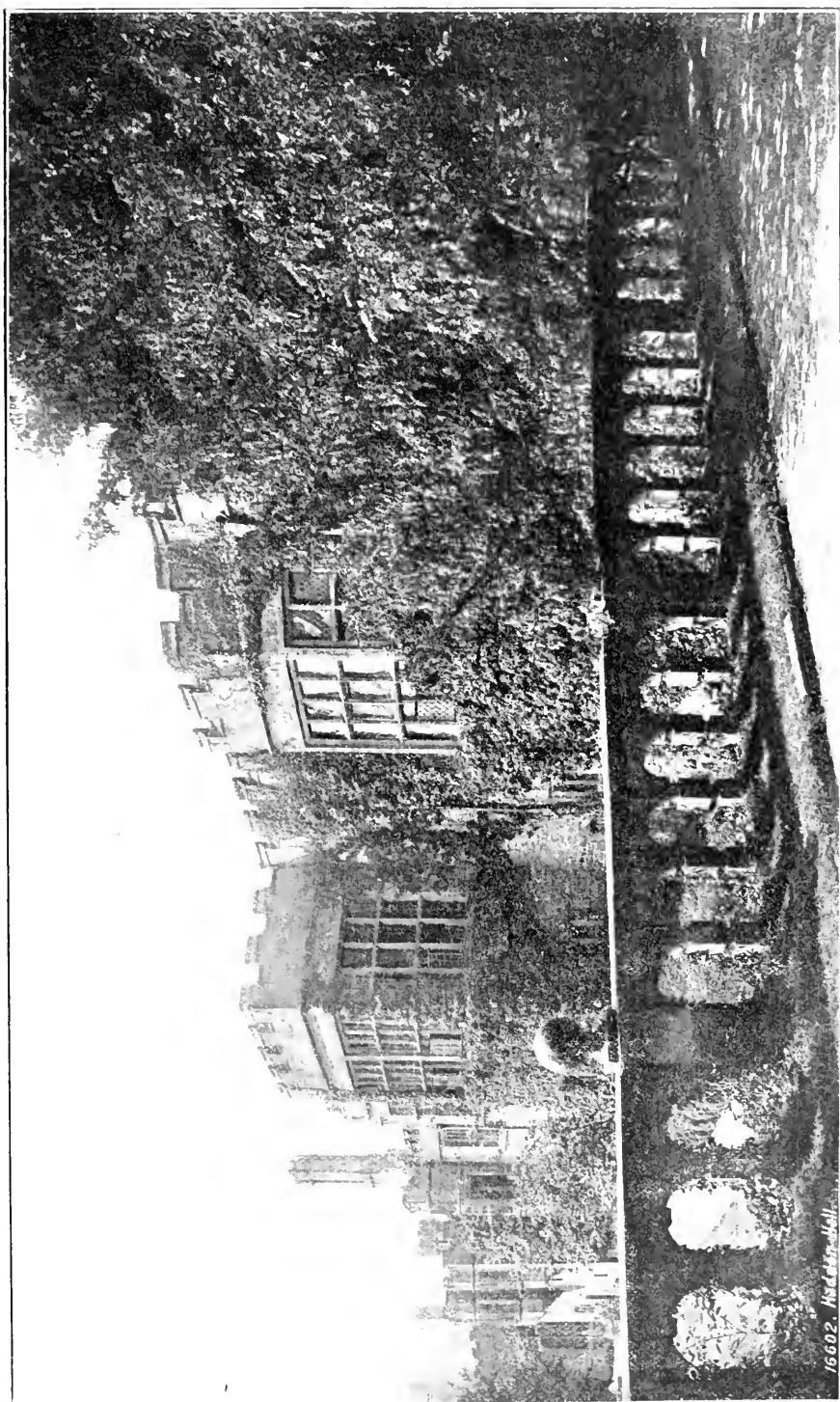
American. Centuries have elapsed, and the province of the architect now is to make the castle perform its whole process of evolution noiselessly in his brain, and come down to date so as to meet the problem of a twentieth century home without disturbing the illusion of its history, a process entailing concerted tension of heart and brain to which the conditions imposed by mere abstract architectural design are puerile.

I have selected a Tudor castle because the field is practically untouched in American Renaissance and modern architecture generally. If there be fashion in adaptation, the fashion has been for Elizabethan and Jacobean adaptations rather than Tudor; but the real reason why we have no creditable offspring of that delightful old rambler—Haddon Hall (see Plate LXXII), in America is to be found in the fact that no American architect capable of exploiting the thing has thought about it or else he has lacked the opportunity, more probably the latter. I have often contemplated that ancient and wonderful staircase on the castle terrace while thrilling romances architectural have filled my

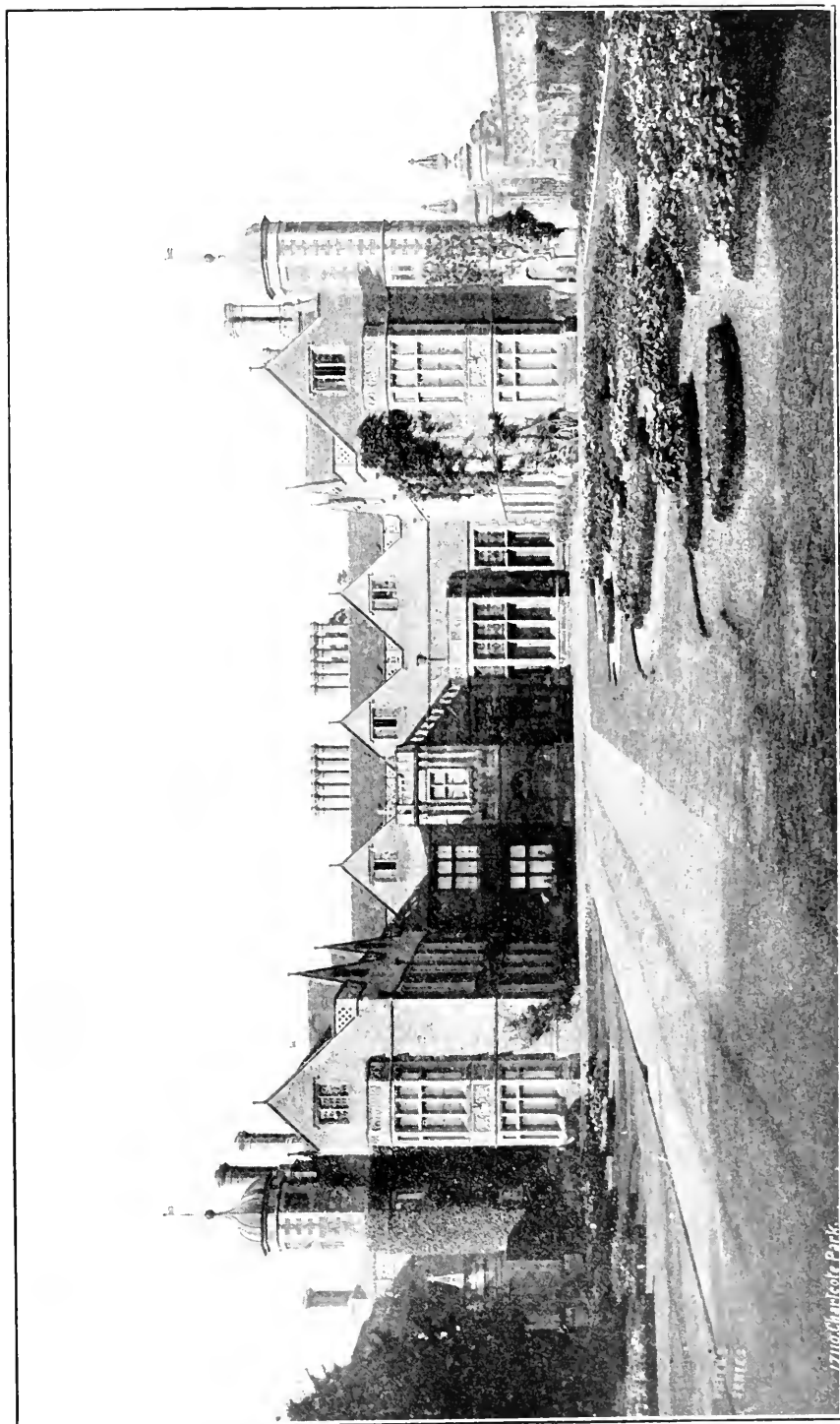


LAMBTON CASTLE.

[illegible]



HADDON HALL.



CHARLECOTE HALL.

Wendell P. Peck

1911
1912

Adaptation

head, though no appreciative client materialized to employ me.

Charlecote Hall (Plate LXXIII) dwells in a unique borderland of the Elizabethan style. What a gracious subject this beautiful edifice supplies for adaptation to date. Any progressive American architect should be able to do it—in fact, he should be expected to improve somewhat upon the original with all the modern science there is at his command. It is true that metal window frames and sashes are not manufactured ordinarily in this country, but it is high time they were, and their appearance in the catalogues of what they would call in England our “ironmongers” cannot be delayed for long, if indications count for anything.

The open-timbered work of Elizabethan houses in America has become very common, and I do not know that I may add any observations of importance concerning this treatment. In the *House Beautiful* for March, 1901, will be found an article upon the subject, mostly in reference, however, to a cottage named “Canterbury Keys,” illustration of which herein appears (Plate LXVIII). Open-timbered work is also

American Renaissance

common to France, Holland and Germany, and, notwithstanding an occasional inimical critic upon the way we construct it in America, is thoroughly good architectural development, and will continue to live in the history of the future because it has history of the past to tell—delicious reminiscences of snug old Anglo-Saxon homes. Moreover, Elizabethan architecture instances a scientific focus of the Gothic and Renaissance spirits, habitually unfriendly, where under the hand of the master these spirits are made to coalesce in love and tranquillity delightful to see.

Mr. Gotch in his "Early Renaissance of England" calls all three schools of design—Tudor, Elizabethan and Jacobean—uniformly Renaissance development because all were influenced by the architecture of Italy, though the Tudor style, hardly perceptibly; but the real English Renaissance, classified for the better understanding of the term, belongs to the later development under the Georges. And it was to this subdivision of the mighty subject that American Renaissance served its apprenticeship, although the articles of indenture, I contend, were legally canceled by the re-



HAMPTON COURT—WOLSEY PALACE.

HAMPTON COURT—SOUTH FAÇADE.



70 AND
APPENDIX

Adaptation

sponsibilities of the "Grand Epoch" (see Chapter V). If there ever existed a condition of unproductive tutelage in America as is imputed by envious critics, it was during the Transitional period. In the earlier chapters of this review, I have defended American Renaissance against all detracting imputations concerning its legitimacy, its honor and its merit, and I do not think I wish to amend anything I have said.

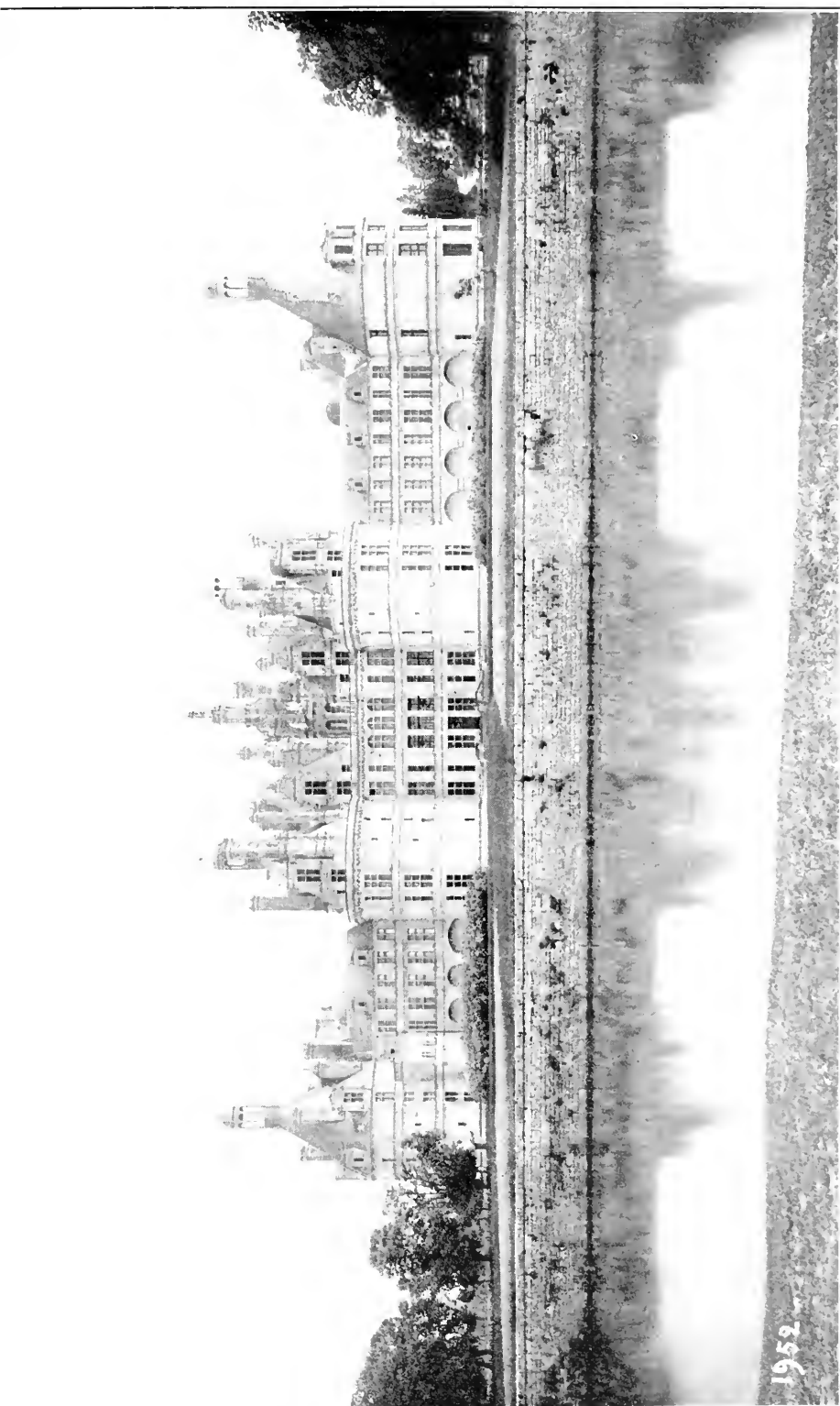
In Plates LXXIV and LXXV I submit two remarkable views of Hampton Court, one, the Wolsey palace in the earliest Renaissance, according to Gotch, and the other the South palace (time of William and Mary) by Sir Christopher Wren, in the latest. The latter façade has already served for American adaptation, and in all probability will continue to do so, being very easily adapted to American use. And if the feat be historically accomplished the resulting composition becomes, *ipso facto*, American Renaissance, not English, however exotic it may at first appear, and although it be the custom to call such an architectural development "pure adaptation." But when we consider that St. Peter's cathedral at Rome was once an

American Renaissance

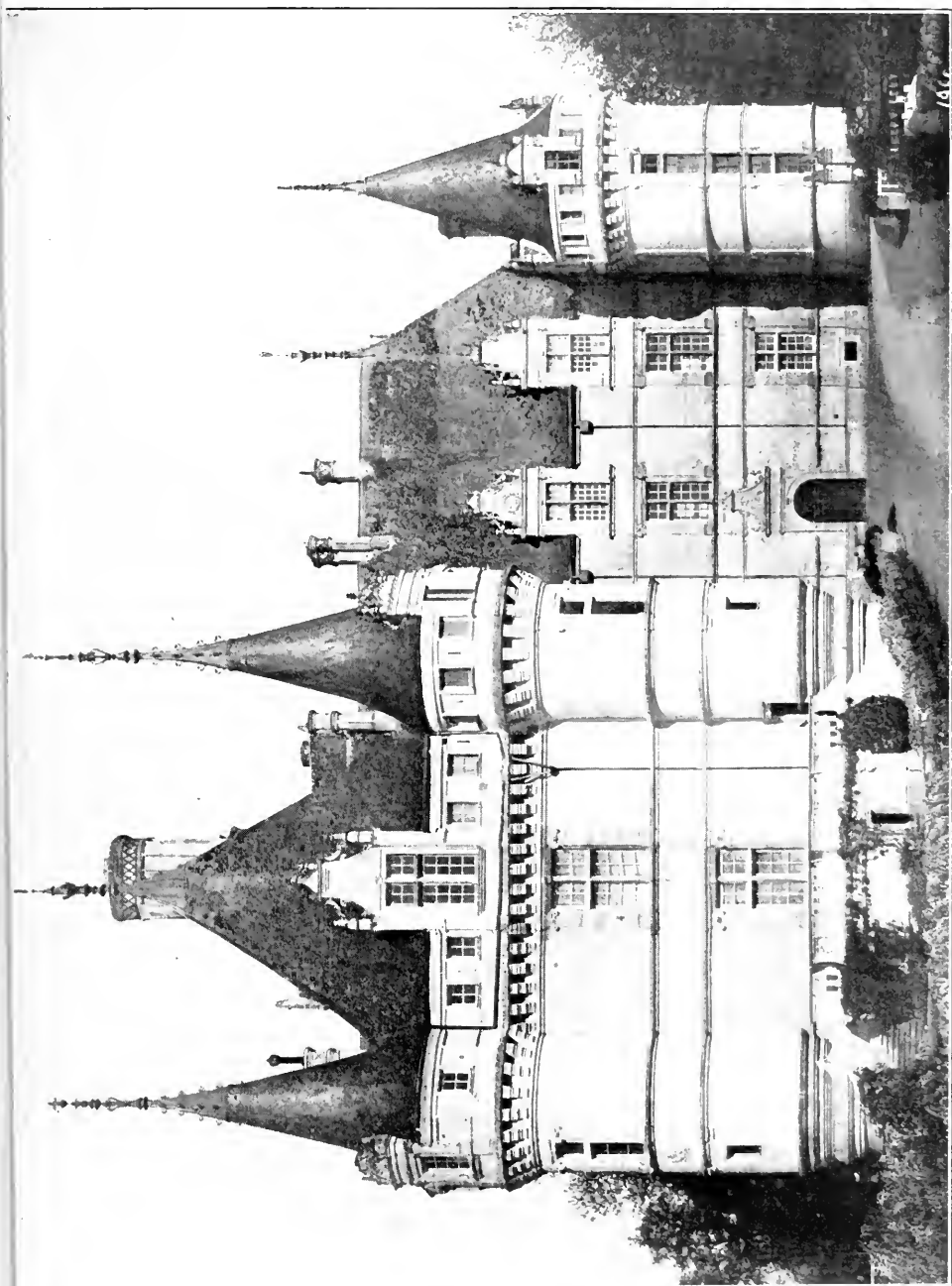
adaptation, the beautiful library of San Marco by Sansovino, also an adaptation, the Louvre and Fontainebleau, adaptations as well, I do not know that we need be particularly scandalized, nor do I doubt for one moment that, if our work be good, it will soon outlive an appellation of uncertain reflection—a word, nevertheless, which every so often must play its part in the history of art.

The school of design which has proved the greatest attraction to the blossoming genius of America is, of course, French Renaissance, preëminently at the time I write. To say that an architect is a Beaux Arts man is equivalent to speaking of a certain much advertised brand of whiskey, in that compliments are superfluous. You call him “a Beaux Arts man,” and—*“that’s all.”*

No Brahmin of India has his faith more absolutely defined than has the Beaux Arts man his. And he must progress, and ply his art as though he were a bishop on the chess-board, always in a designated line, and always with the same local color of the place of his matriculation except, we shall say, when he is off



CHAMBERD, "THE VAL OIS SHOOTING-BOX."



AZAY-LE-RIDEAU.—THE CELEBRATED COUP D'OEIL OF THE CHATEAU.

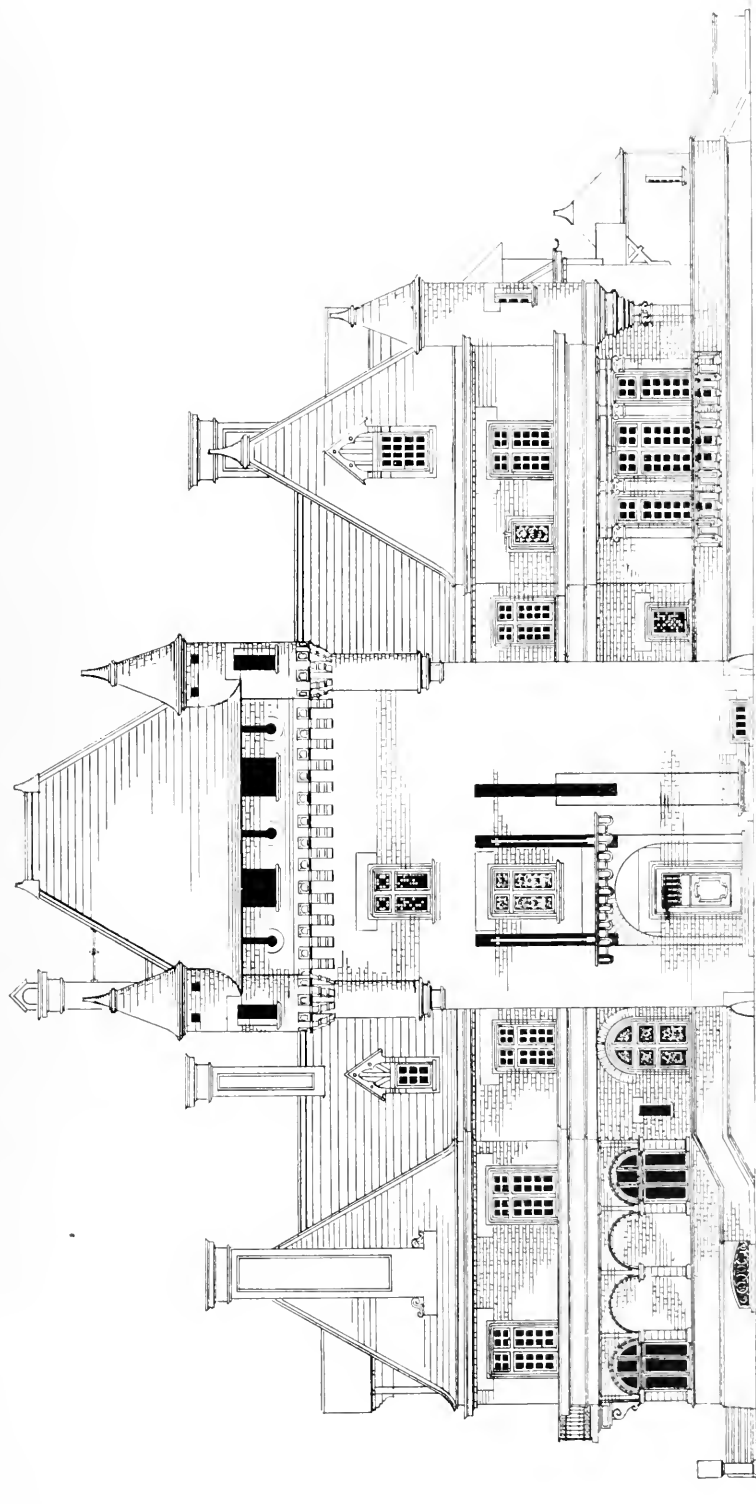
Adaptation

for a spree, which, to be sure, does him no credit, and he dabbles in Colonial, Elizabethan and other diversions. But his art is French Renaissance, not the graceful Renaissance of Pierre le Nepveu at Chambord (see Plate LXXVI), nor the romantic Renaissance so insinuating of Azay-le-Rideau (see Plate LXXVII), the designer of which no modern ascription names, but the colder, impersonal, mathematical Renaissance of the time of Viollet-le-Duc or the ultra, over-decorated Renaissance of the last exposition, and the present generation of French architects. The Ecole des Beaux Arts (Department of Architecture) is essentially a school of material art to which there is no spiritual side. It is the art which we measure by metres and centimetres, not an art we may measure by psychical balances and our affections. And the personal side of architecture—the side which ministers so largely to us when we come to that complex embodiment of our joys and sorrows complete in the one word “home”—well, sentiment has nothing to do with the case in the estimation of the Beaux Arts man.

Of all the historic châteaux in France, Chenonceau

American Renaissance

(see Plate LXVII) has received the most attention from American architects. Replicas of its fascinating *tourelles*—some faithful, some deformed—greet one very frequently in the modern residences of America. We have to recognize the Chenonceau dormers, too, though they be dwarfed and squatted according to the limited roof space at the disposal of the American designer. Such tremendous roofs as were supported with ease by the formidable walls of the old châteaux are prohibitory with us, that is, if we cipher with American expediency and commercial economy. But the right way to adapt a French château is really to make believe restore one, pretending for the nonce, that one is M. Pierre Lescot, M. Claude Perrault or M. Gabriel, and that the king or some grand seigneur of the realm has commanded one's services for the purpose. As in the elevation of the house for Mrs. H. at Morristown (see Plate LXXVIII) I made believe to myself that the mediæval *tour* was genuine, already there, but requiring immediate restoration. It was easy to set imaginary masons to work pointing the machicolations and curtain. I made believe that long disuse had van-



ELEVATION OF A COUNTRY HOUSE FOR MRS. H.—AT MORRISTOWN.

Adaptation

quished the portcullis, leaving its yawning pockets to be disposed of. Commercialism said "wall them up," not I. It would be a pity to lose a particle of the thirteenth century atmosphere that consents to linger. So I decided upon a bold innovation as the privilege of adaptation. I could anchor the chains for holding up the glass canopy over the carriage entry, in those pockets that once housed the arms of the portcullis; and thus, the spooky old *tour* could be saved intact. The main part of the American château is in this case supposedly modern, developed from motives supplied by the minor châteaux of France—the *manoirs*, the *fermes*, with a little American household planning within, necessary for comfort.

But you have noticed that no American, however rich, has yet amassed sufficient fortune to warrant an undertaking anything like an adaptation of Chambord (see Plate LXXVI). A class of architecture in itself, the Valois shooting-box is quite too tremendous in extent for any modern use as a private domicile. The palace of Fontainebleau, also, would entail most too much of a contract for even the president of a trust,

American Renaissance

and I may add to these names, delightful to pronounce, the Louvre (see Plate LXIX), which the people of Philadelphia alone had the hardihood to caricature in a municipal building. Shades of François Mansart, what crimes have we enacted in thy name! [My acknowledgments to Mme. Roland].

Perhaps the most inviting and as little explored field of architecture suitable to domestic purposes in this country that I can think of to suggest to our talent is the opportunity we have in the Swiss châteaux of the eighteenth century. There is a great variety of types from which to choose—high-roofed châteaux and low-roofed châteaux, châteaux of stucco and châteaux of wood. And there never was a sounder theory than that of Switzerland concerning the construction of wooden edifices. I do not except Norway, nor Sweden, nor Japan, for the ancient * châteaux of Switzerland are in academic Gothic, if you please, architecturally of a high order which has withstood the vicissitudes of art and awaits the homage of future generations. To American architects who still have

* Pay no attention to the modern Swiss châteaux. They are infected with the architectural maladies we have in America.



KINGDOR, FRONT ELEVATION



DETAIL "KINGDOR.

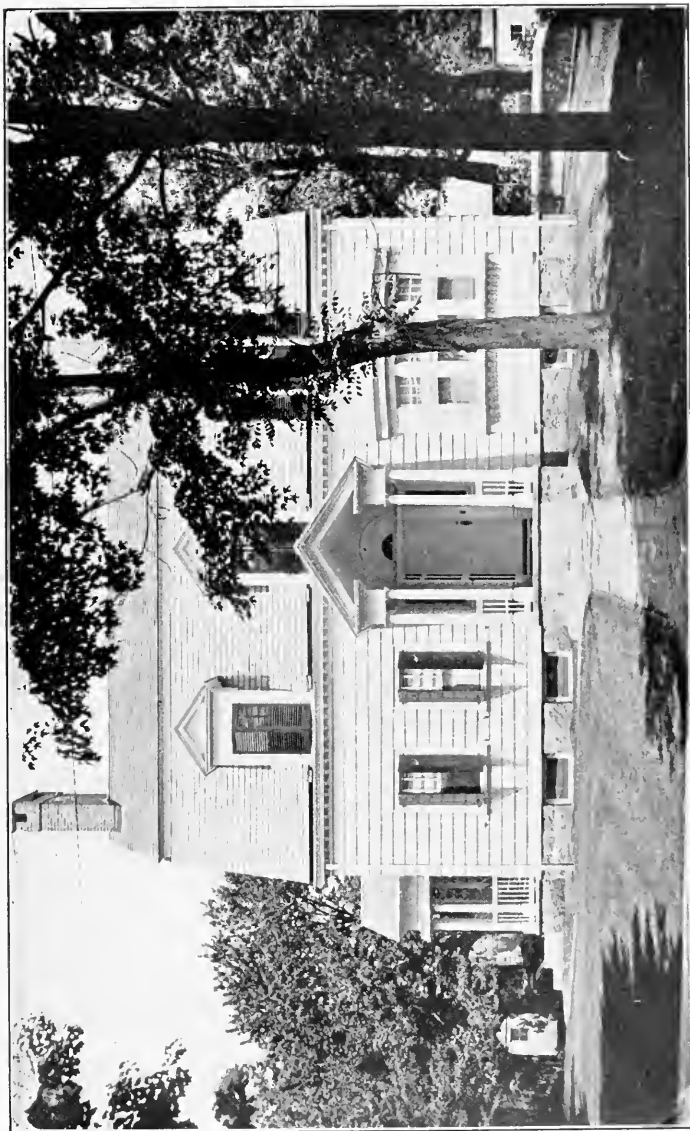
Adaptation

more to do with wood than any other building material these châteaux should prove both instructive and useful. Mr. Jean Schopfer has contributed, in the *Architectural Record* (New York), two very interesting papers about the eighteenth century châteaux, and I will devote what remains of my space in this chapter to an American chateau. I had some little difficulty in prevailing upon its owner to have, but with which, now that it is finished, he has assured me he is perfectly satisfied. (See Kingdor, Plates LXVIII., LXXIX.)

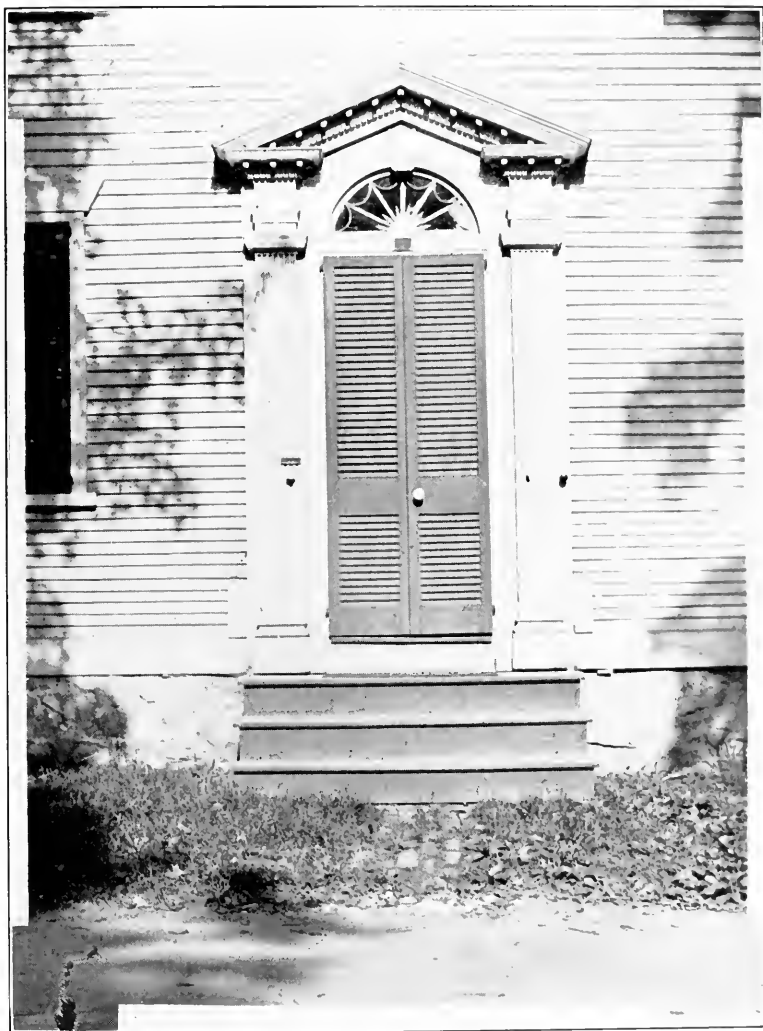
Cypress, which in this part of the country has come to be our main reliance in the absence of good white pine, answers admirably for American adaptations of these Colonial houses—let us call them—of Switzerland. Most any size timbers may be specified without bankrupting the client or inconveniencing the contractor, while some durable stain will form an excellent ground for a venerable patina by infinitesimal particles to attach itself. I confess my only disappointment in Kingdor was that I was not permitted to carve the scriptural legends in archaic missal text that should always adorn the long horizontal timbers of a

American Renaissance

“truly” chalet. For in the most part of the adaptation it became my privilege, much to my unspeakable delight, to say to the black beast that besets the path of all architects—namely, the everlasting spirit of commercialism—expressively what Beau Brummel tells the importunate bailiffs in the play: “Oh, go and walk in Fleet Street!”



A COTTAGE AT EAST ORANGE, N. J.
JOY WHEELER DOW, Architect.



DOORWAY, BRISTOL, R. I.

to VIII
of
California

CHAPTER XI

CONCERNING STYLE

THE result of the best adaptation is the gradual formation of a national style of architecture. The closest adaptation that has been exploited in America both in recent and what we call our ancient work, compared with its separable prototypes, who shall say is not unmistakably modern and American? Style is never evolved by the empirical architecture of irrepressible inventors. Invention belongs to science. Happily, in the field of art, everything was planted, arranged and cultivated for us ages ago, so that we have only to wander as children, in an enchanted garden that our days are not half long enough to encompass. We observe, but wait for the planchette to move—to guide.

Style in architecture and literature alike is something which shapes itself unconsciously to the mind—

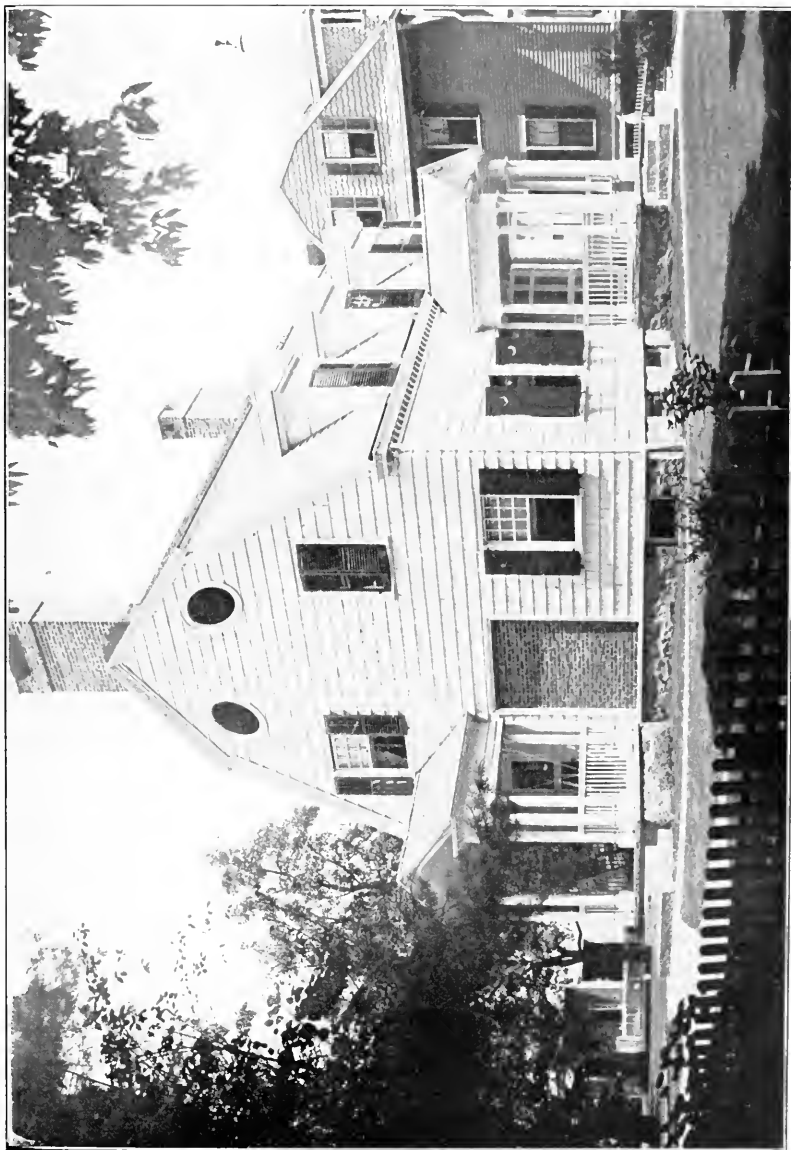
American Renaissance

something which will neither be coerced nor cajoled, but obeyed. Style selects its craftsman rather than craftsmen their style. Style is the master, and we are the students ever observing, listening, trying to understand, waiting for our cue, and finally speaking our lines according to the histrionic ability there is in each of us, for style is eminently dramatic.

But the moment we set up for ourselves and say, "Go to, let us make a style!" that moment we miss our usefulness in the economy of art.

I knew of a young student of literature who, convalescing from an attack of grippe, was found by his physician one day, sitting upright in bed surrounded by a lot of new-looking books. As the visitor failed to conceal some surprise, the enthusiast hastened with an explanation for which the reader is scarcely better prepared. "Doctor," he said, "I am reading Kipling for style!"

Now, no matter how encouraging to the physician was the patient's interest in the books, it was a most discouraging thing as a matter of art. For you don't want to read anybody to copy his style, much less a



MITCHELL COTTAGE, EAST ORANGE.



DETAIL—MITCHELL COTTAGE, EAST ORANGE,

Joy WHEELER Dow, Architect.

Concerning Style

contemporary of your own. And no architectural student should want to imitate the style of his master or employer, for it is heresy. It is mockery.

If you have not sense enough to listen to your own muse, to study the history of art for yourself, to speak the language of architecture as all your honored predecessors have spoken it, following religiously the splendid historical chart that is ever at your service for reference while leaving your style to take care of itself—I am sorry for you.

In my own very limited scope of usefulness, I am quite willing to confess that I have never bothered about style, and do not consider that I have any worth mentioning; although, I suppose, an occasional architect is annoyed past endurance by somebody who comes with an illustration of a particular piece of my work which has appeared in the magazines, requesting that my style be copied. Of course, it is not my style that is desired, but the expression of Anglo-Saxon home feeling as opposed to whatever is adventitious—out of place there—however correct academically, and according to the rules of harmony, good form or any-

American Renaissance

thing else you choose to call it. All tendency in myself toward mannerism, prejudice, partisanship and eclectic theory I have endeavored to repress, for I found that good style needed no suggestions from me.

Good style means the historical note which measures the success of an architectural design. It is the distinct theme we must be able to recognize throughout, no matter how elaborate or original the accompaniment. To exemplify which point I have selected the Searles cottage, erected in 1889, at Block Island (see Plate LXXXVI), not because it was erected without regard to expense or financial returns, for there is much domestic architecture in America erected quite as independently of either consideration which would ruin my argument were I to use it; but because the Searles cottage is one of the most original designs in American Renaissance, without in the least compromising good style, that I know of in contemporary work. It is said to have been designed by a decorator, but in that case merely adds another instance of the truism that there are decorators who should be architects and architects who should be decorators. The illustration shows the

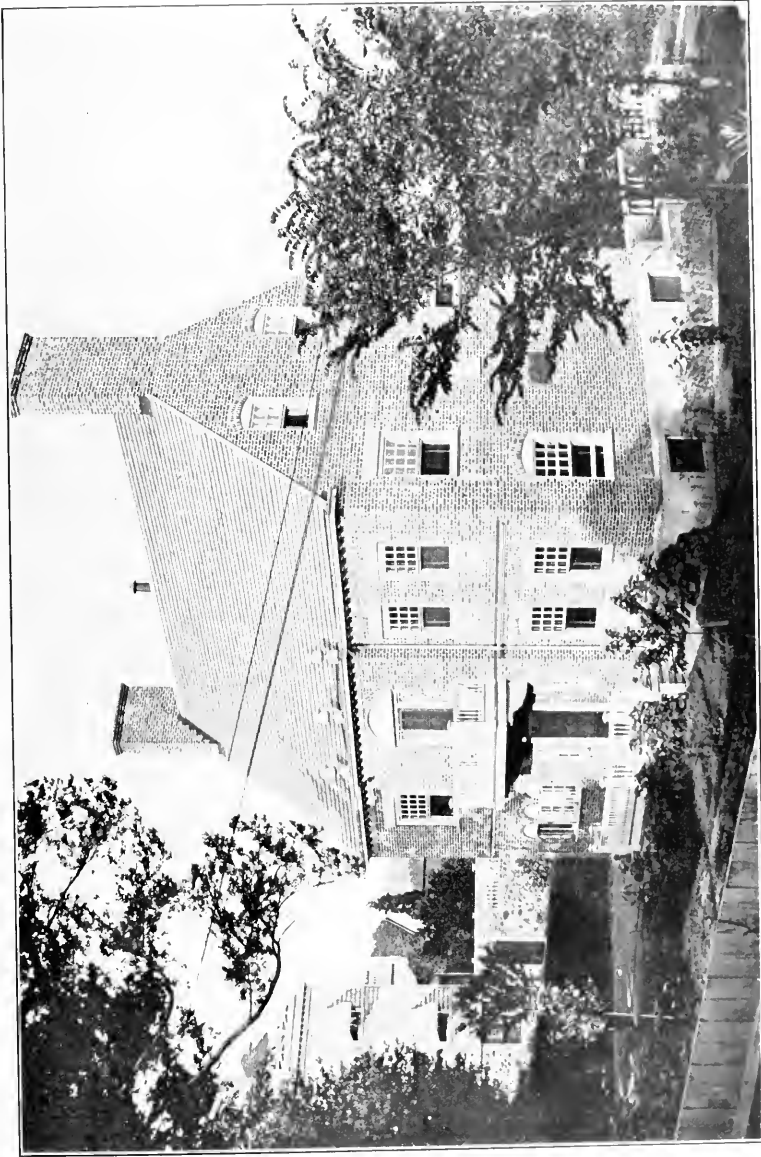


PRINCESSGATE.



PRINCESSGATE—REAR.

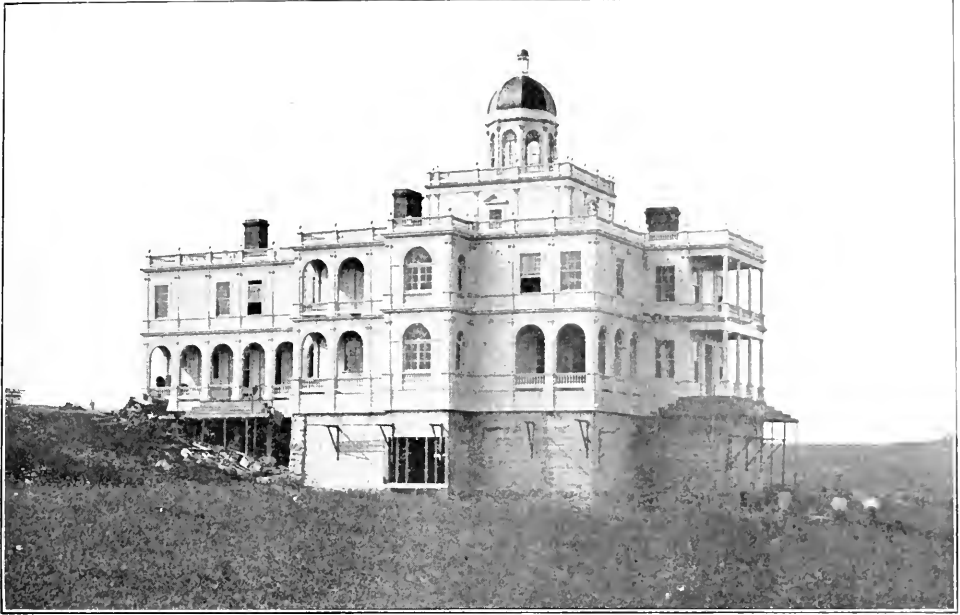
Joy Wheeler Dow, Architect.



EASTOVER—THE WEST FRONT.

Joy Winter Dow, Architect.

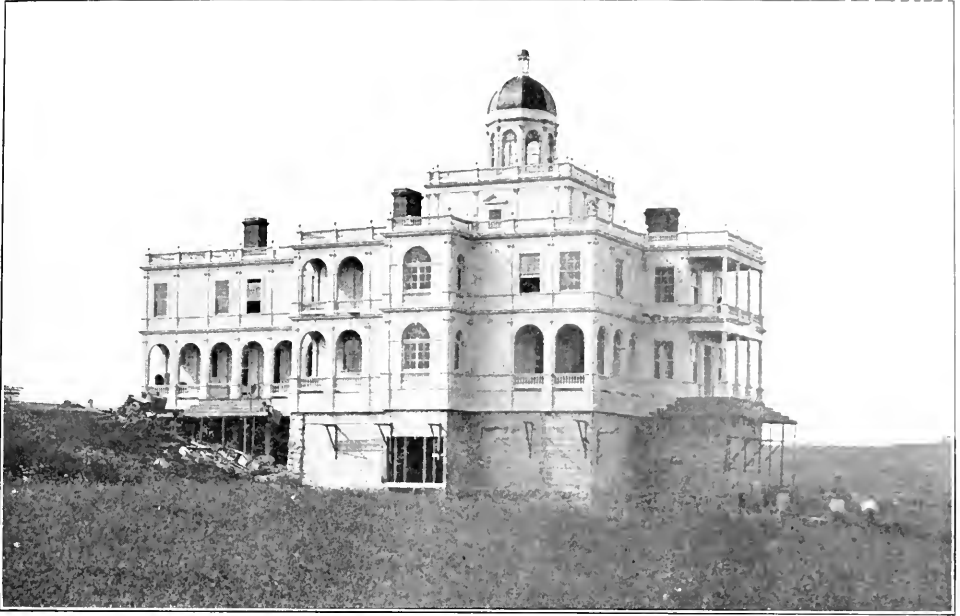
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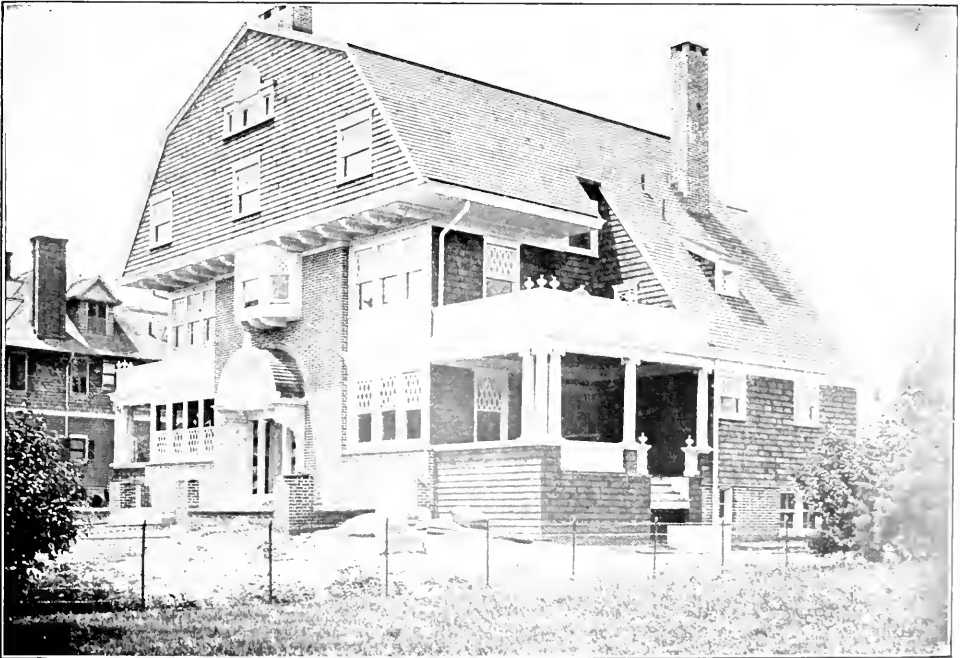
SEARLES' COTTAGE—EXEMPLIFYING ARCHITECTURAL STYLE.



THE MODERN AMERICAN DWELLING—EXEMPLIFYING FASHION.



SEARLES' COTTAGE—EXEMPLIFYING ARCHITECTURAL STYLE.



THE MODERN AMERICAN DWELLING—EXEMPLIFYING FASHION.

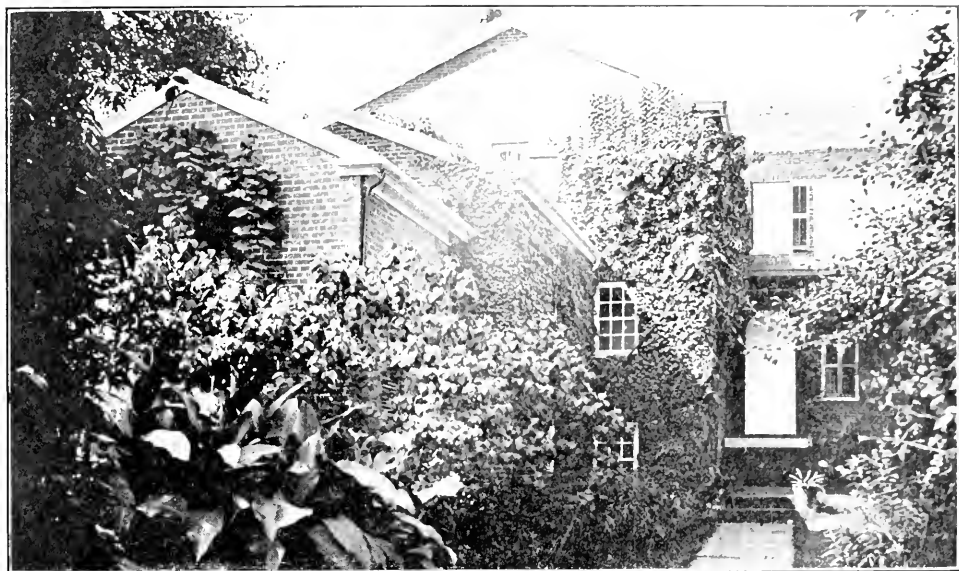
Concerning Style

building in process of construction, but let us place it beside the illustration of a very recent example of modern house and see what happens. I think thereby will be conveyed to the mind of the reader more insight of the difference between style and fashion in architecture (see Plate LXXXVI) than could be accomplished by writing in a week. At last we see a house with a cupola where the cupola has a recognized mission, and pleases rather than offends, as occurs also at Mount Vernon, in Virginia (Plates XXVII and XXVIII), and where it crowns the roof of the McPhædris house at Portsmouth (Plate XXXI). Here are instances where we should miss the cupola as part, not so much of the design, perhaps, as of the style, the historical atmosphere, were it absent. It would be the incomplete sentence, in other words, where the original thought had not been completely expressed.

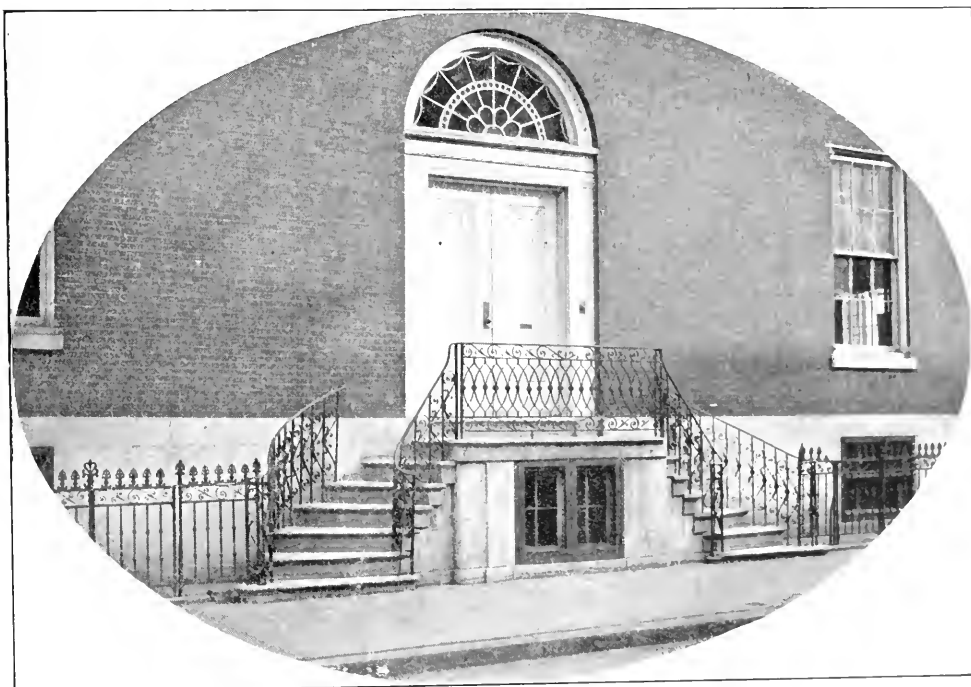
I am aware that the Searles cottage is not one that, ordinarily, would be called "pretty." The cottage I designed for Mr. Mitchell, at East Orange (see Plates LXXX, LXXXII, LXXXIII and XCI), I dare say

American Renaissance

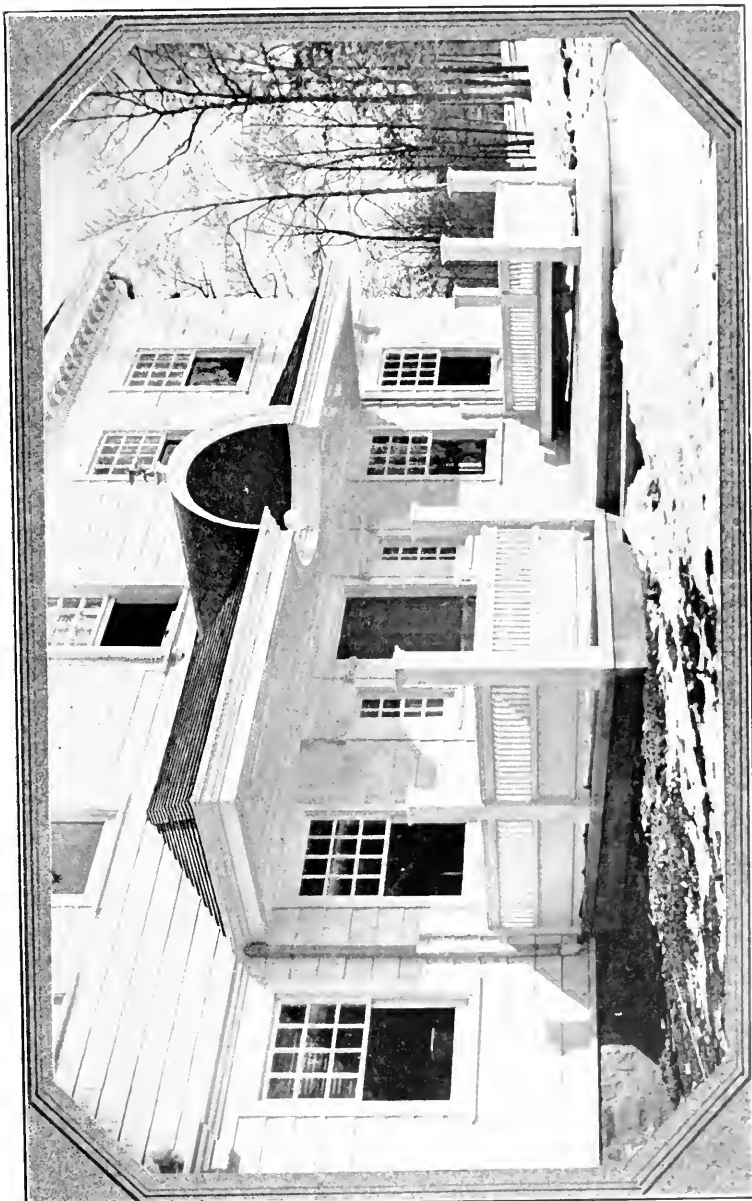
answers to that description better, as does also Princessgate, at Wyoming, N. J. (see Plates XVIII, LXXXIV, LXXXIX and XCI), but I am speaking now of style, the picturesque is something else again. I can fancy the beginner in architecture leaning over his drawing-board and saying, "Well, that's the funniest Colonial house I ever saw!" But the first year of his course will correct the slight astigmatism from which he suffers. For, even should he fail to pursue the engaging study of style, style is so insinuating, because of the immense significance it has behind it, that very soon it will be speaking to him. And while the student feels it only in that first intangible stage, unable to say to himself what it is, even while people aver that the Searles cottage was entirely misplaced on the treeless coast of a pelagic isle, while they tell him that no use could be found for it except as a kind of casino, yet there will begin to dawn upon him an uncontrollable appreciation, just as began to dawn upon the aged auditor in the pit of the old-time playhouse at Paris during the production of a masterpiece by Molière, till, toward the end of the second act, no



STYLE AND THE PICTURE.
Watkinson House, Middletown, Ct.



DETAIL—SOUTH EIGHTH STREET, PHILADELPHIA.



DETAIL—SALA ERGATE.

Concerning Style

longer master of his enthusiasm, he cried out to the author on the stage, "*Courage, Molière! Voilà la vraie comédie!*" And in good architectural style do we not see a comedy indeed, faithfully enacted? Yet, of the thousand and one things that have gone to make architectural style all intimately connected with human events the influence of individuals has counted least. One generation of builders has taken up the work where its immediate predecessor stopped. Each generation commits its blunders, while each adds the imperceptible trifles of such intrinsic value, taken together, as to have produced style.

The fashions of architecture—they perish. Style endures.

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

THE eye of an artist differs structurally not at all from the eyes of other people. His constant having to do with lines, values and all that, gives him an enviable facility in delineation, the same facility that training would impart in any other vocation; but it is the man—the artist temperament that exists behind the ocular sense that denominates the artist, a matter of pure luck, however, or of birth, which amounts to the same thing.

When nature issues his temperament to a man, she stamps on the back of it the words “not transferable” rubricated. By no effort of his own can he bestow his temperament upon anybody else nor materially alter it within himself. He looks upon things always in a certain way—envious folks call it a squint—never may he see them in any other. He struggles with a personal bias so strong, that, in nine cases out of ten, he had

Conclusion

much rather die than have to live his life contrary to the cherished autonomy imposed by temperament.

The artist contends with a temperament unusually exacting and, at times, very inconvenient. I remember having to ride my bicycle twelve miles one afternoon some years ago, to a bakery in another town from where I lived, to gratify a whim of temperament. I suppose, for some particularly delicious tea rolls that were manufactured there. I felt I could not possibly get along with the plain bread and butter I knew we had for supper. I purchased the rolls, and was tying the precious bundles to the handle-bars of my wheel when a carriage drove up in front of the bakery. It contained two rather unprepossessing women who were evidently acquainted with the baker's wife, judging from the familiar way they called to her from the curb. The baker's wife came out upon the doorstep, and inquired what kind of bread she should bring them. It was then, without an idea of causing the slightest shock to the sensibilities of the man they saw, with a bicycle, they replied with picturesque indifference—"Oh, any kind, just so long as it is bread to fill-up on!" Over-

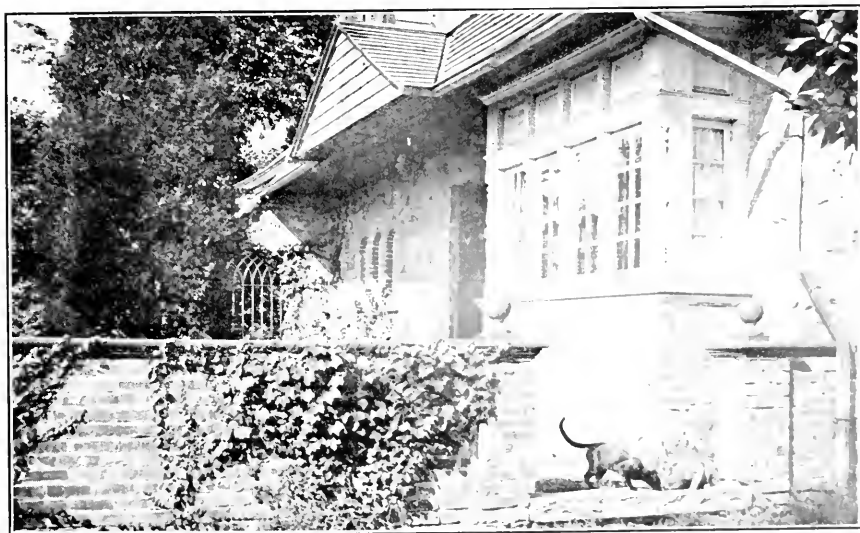
American Renaissance

hearing this I could not help making the necessary mental memoranda what unpromising subjects for art influences were the temperaments of these women—how little education could really do for them! how utterly impossible it would be for them to change their temperaments, and how, in all probability, they had much rather be dead than to be continually harrassed by the fastidious obligations of art!

But the case I have chosen is, perhaps, extreme. There is a pleasure for most temperaments in art—a certain happiness that it contributes in a mild way. The average temperament experiences through art a sensation akin to that produced by music, and like music to the average temperament, art is by no means a necessity. It is merely the graceful accomplishment to be cultivated after the serious business of life is off the stage for the day, and we turn to playthings; whereas in the case of the artist, it is his whole existence. My mother ridiculed me about episodes like that of the rolls, but always commended my talent for drawing. Although I tried to explain, she refused to believe that my talent for drawing was only one result of the tem-



MISS SIMPLICITY—HER HOUSE



DETAIL — PRINCESS-GATE.

Conclusion

perament which sent me for the rolls. For does it not naturally follow that if any old bread will do to live on, why, any old house will do to live in, and I should have had no interest for anything better, certainly no incentive to the laborious grind of the drawingboard? Still, in no instance, I believe, is art or charity—for they are one and the same—wholly absent, if sometimes obscure, in the temperaments of civilized people. Without the artistic sense, charity is the uncut diamond, it yet accomplishes its own mission; while again, the gentle passion reveals itself in singular guises, we recognize it with a little patience. Unique among which guises let me cite the astute financier's well-known love of flowers,—and here let me tell you something besides! It may be a strange observation, but the love of one's fellow beings, and an inordinate love of flowers, in a man, rarely go together. Robespierre, at the fête to the Supreme Being, walked ahead of his colleagues, laden down with flowers, and away back in the morning of time the avocation of Cain was the cultivation of flowers. So, whenever you see a man passionately fond of flowers (professional florists excepted) you may

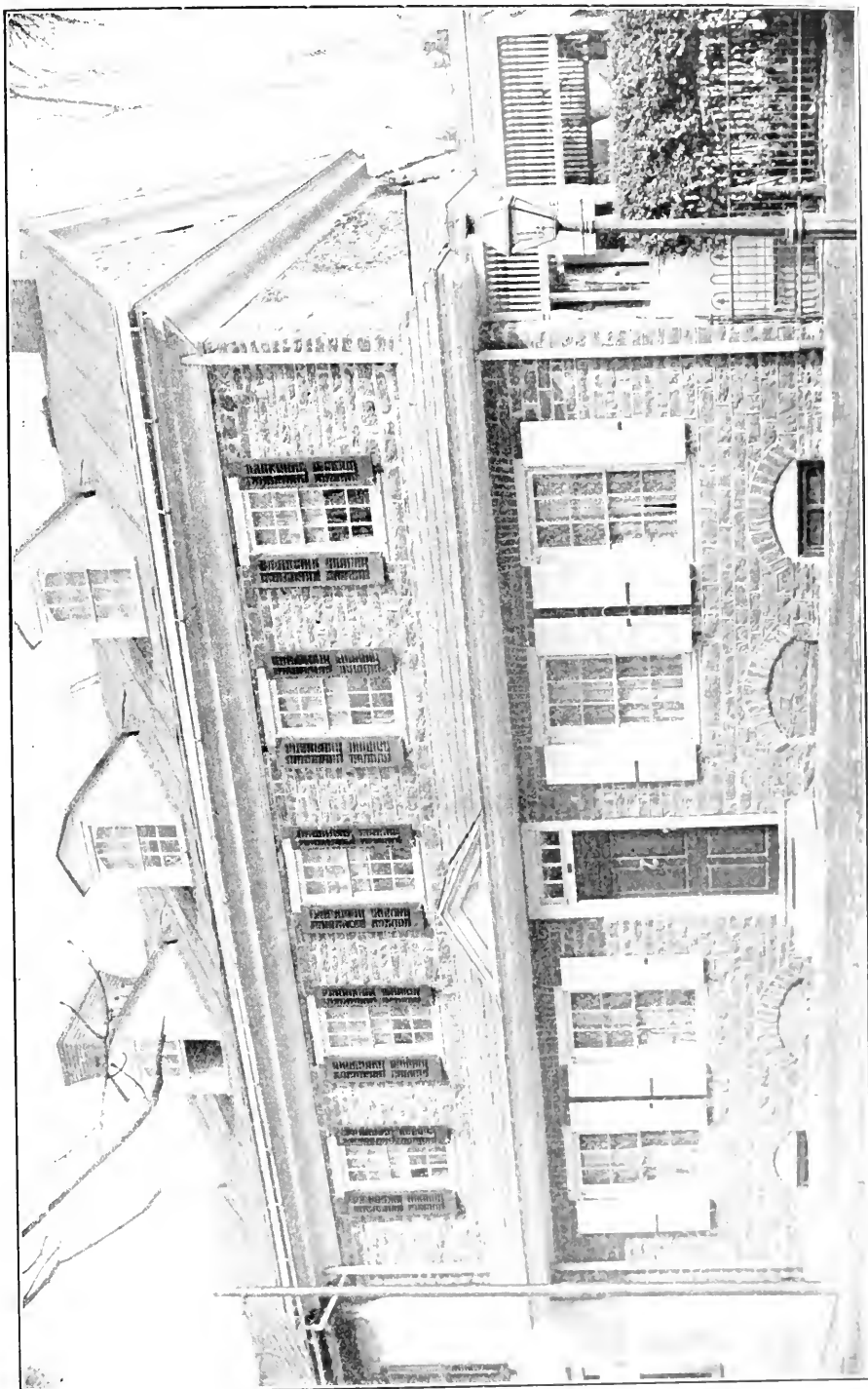
American Renaissance

know that every atom of charity which, normally, should be distributed throughout his whole nature, has been focussed at this one point; and it behooves you to mind the painted notice to small craft you have seen suspended from the guardrail of an awe-inspiring ocean liner in port, namely—

.....
: Keep clear of this ship's propellers! :
.....

In his conservatories, surrounded by brilliant flora from all over the world, it is quite different; here you will find your astute financier the most charming of hosts; but in your business deals with him, have a care!

No true artist could be entirely happy to look at the world from the financier's standpoint. He may listen attentively to the cunning of expediency fascinatingly unfolded, for his own good, for the good of his family, and the assurance of the future, he may heartily wish to exchange temperaments with that financier, temporarily, till he shall have gained independence of the world commercial, in vain. The unaccommodating



GREEN TREE INN GERMAN TOWN

Conclusion

temperament again will not let him. He is perfectly aware that there is not half enough in the world to go round, and that he must divert the earnings of other people somewhat into his own coffers if he is to be entirely comfortable; but he had rather that circumstances divert these earnings than his own cupidity. He hopes that God will, after a little, see how hard He has made it for the people individually, and order a new dispensation. It may be a forlorn hope, but it is none the less a hope divinely implanted in every true artist and in every other charitable nature. What else is it that applauds the dramatic note whenever and wherever it is struck, even though it be the Laura Jean Libby kind from the melodrama and the threadbare theme of the indigent heroine who arraigns the conventional villain thus—

“I’d rather be the poor working-girl that I am than all your cruel gold can make me!”

These are the sentiments which reflect those of every true artist. The profession of architecture even more than that of the ministry should be entered without hope of much financial gain. For the sake of good-

American Renaissance

ness don't believe any such Munchhausen stuff about it as you, perhaps, read in a popular magazine lately. The preacher's service to God is direct, something which He must take into consideration at least every Sunday; while the service of the architect is indirect—so subtle indeed as to create the natural fear in a student's mind lest God forget about him entirely, even to the barest livelihood. Professor Ware of the school of architecture at Columbia College once told me that if he paused for one moment to consider how very few of the new class of pupils which every year assembled to be instructed could succeed by reason of the inexorable laws of supply and demand alone, he could not teach them. "But," he added with a twinkle of satisfaction in his eye for having placed his finger squarely on a grim but unerring philosophy—"I had much rather starve to death in a profession that I loved than in a business that I hated, since success in everything is achieved only by the same meagre percentage."

I am not forgetting that the profession of architecture is frequently turned into a business enterprise, run



PRINCESSGATE (MODERN) DEVELOPED FROM DUTCH AND ENGLISH
FARM-HOUSE MOTIVES.



Try to Have the Rear of Your House as Attractive as the Front.

Conclusion

upon business principles, used merely as a means to an end, and that end financial success—a state of things which has retarded the development of American Renaissance more than any other one factor—but this leads me back again to art and commercialism, to which I have already consecrated a chapter of this review. Let us consider for the present only the different kinds of architects we have in America, so differently equipped as to cause positive amazement while cataloguing them. What diversity of talent confronts us! talent, in some cases, one would say, that scarcely concerned architecture. I can think of no other profession which has quite so many branch specialists. Incredible as it may seem, there are prominent and successful architects—trained architects of ability—who are able to draw plans but who cannot draw elevations, and others who can draw elevations but cannot plan. There are architects who are skilful draughtsmen who cannot design, architects who can design but cannot draw at all, architects who can only write specifications and superintend—two very important branches of the profession, however, that usually go together—while stranger still,

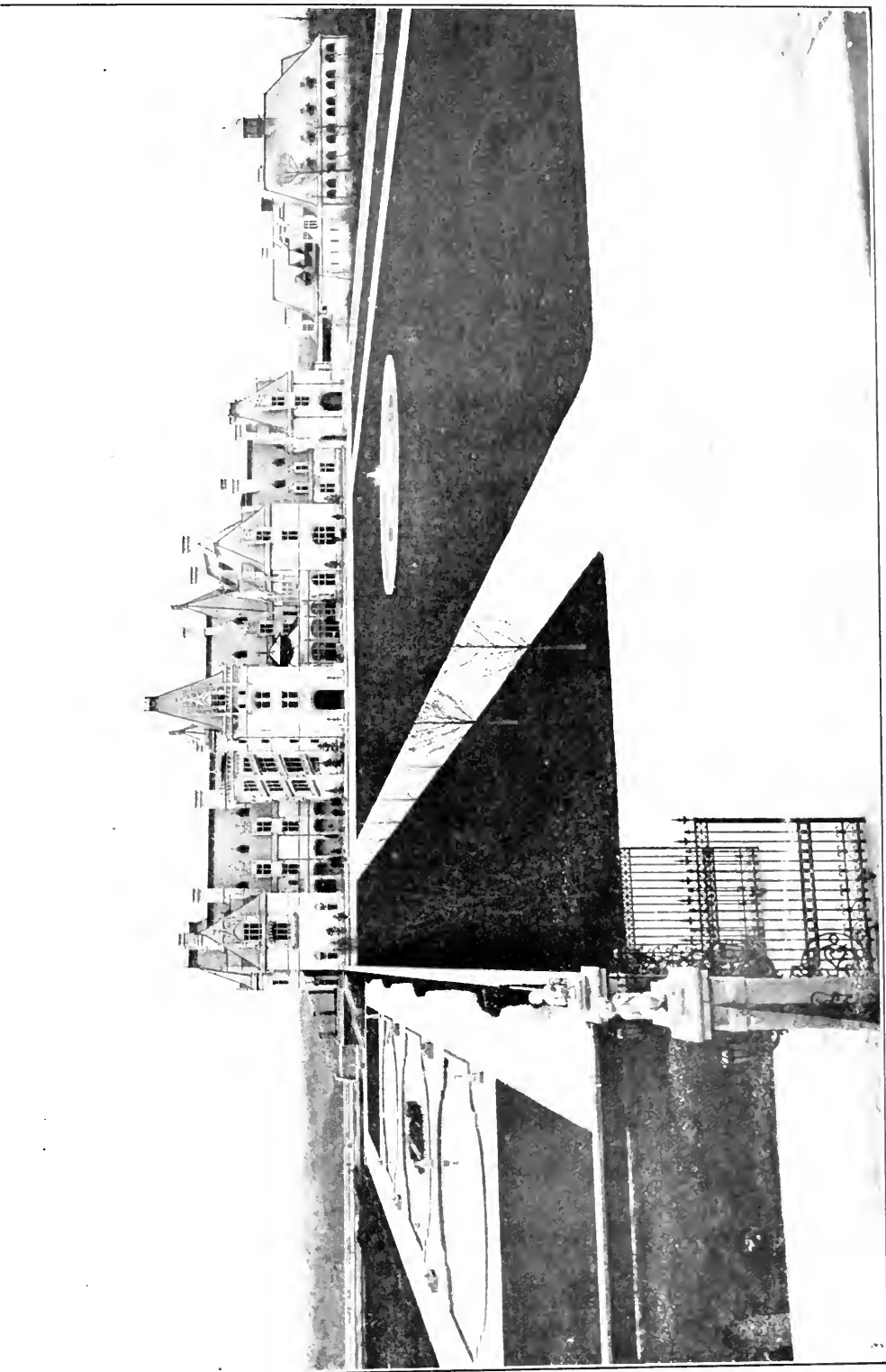
American Renaissance

there are practising architects who can neither design nor draw nor write specifications nor even superintend, but who possess a wonderful business aptitude and personal magnetism by which they command clients for their partners or draughtsmen who actually prepare the drawings and the other instruments of service.

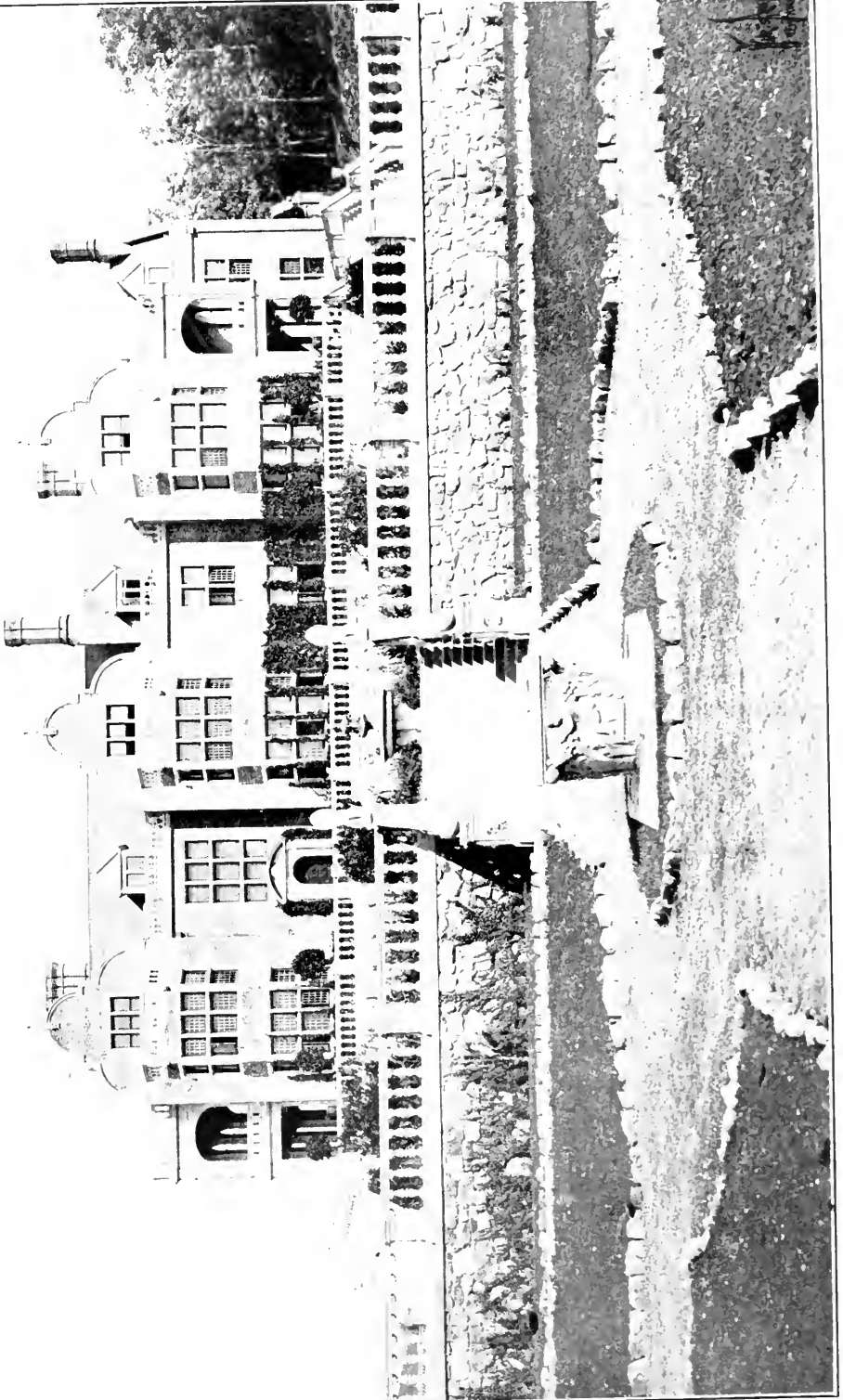
This class of architects is, by no means, confined to America or to the epoch.* As long ago as the reign of Louis XIV in France, Jules Hardouin Mansart was a shining example of the financier-architect. The description of him given in Miss Wormeley's admirable translation of the memoirs of Saint-Simon † is so intensely interesting that I believe I cannot do better than to quote the fragments which succeed :

* There is one other kind of architect I have failed to include who I believe is indigenous to America. I refer now to the man who can neither draw, design, write specifications nor superintend, and who has no business ability, but who belongs to the genus "angel" of a theatrical company, who pays the rent of an expensive suite of offices, and becomes a special partner, perhaps, but by no stretch of courtesy, I should say, should be truthfully called an architect.

† Versailles Historical Series—Hardy, Pratt & Co., Boston.



BELMORE IN NORTH CAROLINA
RICHARD MORRIS HUNT, Architect.



HOUSE OF H. W. POOR, CENTRO PARK, N. Y.
J. HENRY KASSABER, ARCHT.

Conclusion

“He [Hardouin Mansart] was ignorant of his business. De Coste, his brother-in-law, whom he made head architect, knew no more than he. They got their plans, designs and ideas from a designer of buildings named L'Assurance whom they kept, as much as they could, under lock and key. Mansart's cunning [his name was probably assumed for what we would call in America an ‘ad.’] lay in coaxing the king by apparent trifles into long and costly enterprises, and by showing him incomplete plans, especially for the gardens, which instantly captured his mind, and caused him to make suggestions: then Mansart would exclaim that he never should have thought of what the king proposed, went into raptures, declared he was a scholar compared to him, and so made the king tumble whichever way he planned without suspecting it.”

* * * * *

“He made immense sums out of his works and his contracts, and all else that concerned his buildings, of which he was absolute master, and with such authority that not a workman, contractor or person about the buildings would have dared speak or make the slightest

American Renaissance

fuss. As he had no taste, or the king either, he never executed anything fine, nor even convenient for the vast expenses he incurred."

The episode about his bridge at Moulins that floated down the river to Nantes is excruciatingly funny as told by Saint-Simon, but I must not appropriate the space necessary for its relation.

I cannot think, however, that the damage of an occasional Hardouin Mansart in France or a Mr. Pecksniff, I may say, in England, to the architecture of either country has been anything like as great as that done American Renaissance by their numerous colleagues upon this side of the water. That our modern architecture is as good as it is, is no less than remarkable, considering, too, how we are always trying to make it pay financially. And when at last there comes a scintillating opportunity where an architect is no longer obliged to turn out a rent-trap, a manufacturing plant, or something else that will pay a given percentage upon the investment, as happens in the case of a large country house, the marks of our national trade are very apt to obtrude themselves in a hundred amusing ways. The

Conclusion

commercial habit cannot be relinquished in a moment, and thus, unconsciously, we betray ourselves.

Of the modern country seats of America, I should select Biltmore (see Plate XCII), in the North Carolina mountains—the masterpiece of Richard Morris Hunt—as standing first and foremost at the time I write. It is one of the very few examples of domestic architecture we have that can be compared with the historic castles of England to which I have referred and we are accustomed to seeing illustrated so beautifully in *Country Life*. We call Biltmore French Renaissance now; it will be American Renaissance later on. No other of Mr. Hunt's designs can begin to equal it. You may observe that Ochre Court at Newport has a fine elevation to the sea. It is true. But the place is much marred by an overgrown servants' wing, while the notorious Marble-house appears to have been created under pressure when the artist was overworked, for it has neither his inspiration nor individuality, merely representing several thousand cubic feet of classic architecture which would serve to better advantage for a plate in a text-book. But at Biltmore, we have an

American Renaissance

original design with the necessary attributes—attributes which I need not take the trouble to enumerate again, having been so particular about the reader's making their acquaintance in the other chapters.

I remember I also mentioned the house of H. W. Poor, Esq., at Tuxedo (see Plates XCIII and XCIV), as an example of modern work in America that might withstand the odious ordeal of international comparison. Really, it is a very simple thing, the Anglo-Saxon home idea; for the life of me, I do not see why we have so little of it. The Jacobean manor-house historically developed to date is an admirable medium of expression, and in the illustration in Plate XCIV we may discover one other example of good American Renaissance. If you think the Tuxedo house looks too English to be called that, place it, if you please, beside Blickling Hall in Norfolkshire, a genuine Jacobean prototype, several fine illustrations of which will be found in the *Architectural Record* for October, 1901. Upon the long gallery of the latter, I think, Mr. T. Henry Randall, the architect of Mr. Poor's house, has improved. The gallery of Blickling Hall has some



H. W. POOR HOUSE, TUXEDO, N. Y.
T. HENRY RANDALL, Architect.



PHILLIPS HOUSE, LAWRENCE, L. I.
T. HENRY RANDALL, Architect.

Conclusion

ugly features. In my opinion, this American architect understands the adaptation of a Jacobean manor-house better than any other of his day.

It is style and historical development—not fashion—that produces the architectural comedy—its story, its personality, its life. And now that I am about to speak again of the most popular kind of houses of all in America—Colonial houses, notwithstanding the very great number of them erected during the last decade or two, I am yet almost in despair of finding illustrations where the architectural comedy, its personality and life are to be sufficiently discovered. Perhaps the firm of architects who have been most noted as specialists in this line have done nothing better than the house they designed in the eighties of the last century for Mr. William Edgar, on Beach Street in Newport (see Plate XCV). This design was always very much superior to that of the Taylor house, of which I drew a sketch for Chapter IX: and as time goes on the gap between them widens, while I do not see that the Edgar house loses by contrast with a number of much more pretentious successors in the same style of composition.

American Renaissance

That there is so much room for general improvement in America is what I have to offer in extenuation for the questionable sarcasms into which I have sometimes fallen in these articles. Because of its salutary influence, I have found sarcasm useful in scoring my points, preferring it greatly to flattery, which D'Israeli used, he averred, for the same purpose—he “found it useful”—adding, “and when it comes to royalty you want to lay it on with a trowel.” I do not know that the simile holds good as far as that, and I fear my sarcastic allusions have already become fatiguing.

In glancing back over what I have written, I find yet another class of architects and another theory of architecture to which no credit has been given. I refer now to that class of architects who publish books of ready-made plans, and who advertise for clients in the periodicals, and to their theory of architecture which does not allow that the artist enters into the proposition. This is as I understand it, at least, from one of their advertisements, which reads, “Plans made *not* by an *artist*, but by an *architect*.”

Bored nearly to death by having to listen to unwel-



GARDEN GATE AT WYOMING, N. J.



WINDOW OF A DINING-ROOM.



THE EDGAR HOUSE, NEWPORT.

Conclusion

come art discussion which to them does not seem either necessary or practical in what they consider a purely utilitarian business for housing the people, they have conceived a positive aversion to architecture as a fine art. I do not know exactly what they mean by the affectation and exaggeration they exploit if it is not intended to be artistic; but it is quite possible they deprecate all that, themselves, as the necessary amount of tawdriness the American people will have, feeling the while unequal to educating such hopeless material. For it may be that I do these wholesalers of printed plans a great injustice—it may be they realize, as do other architects, only too keenly, that architecture is the cubic measure of art, and requires an artist of the third power to fuss with it successfully, in which case I fancy I recognize even greater method in their madness.

THE END

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